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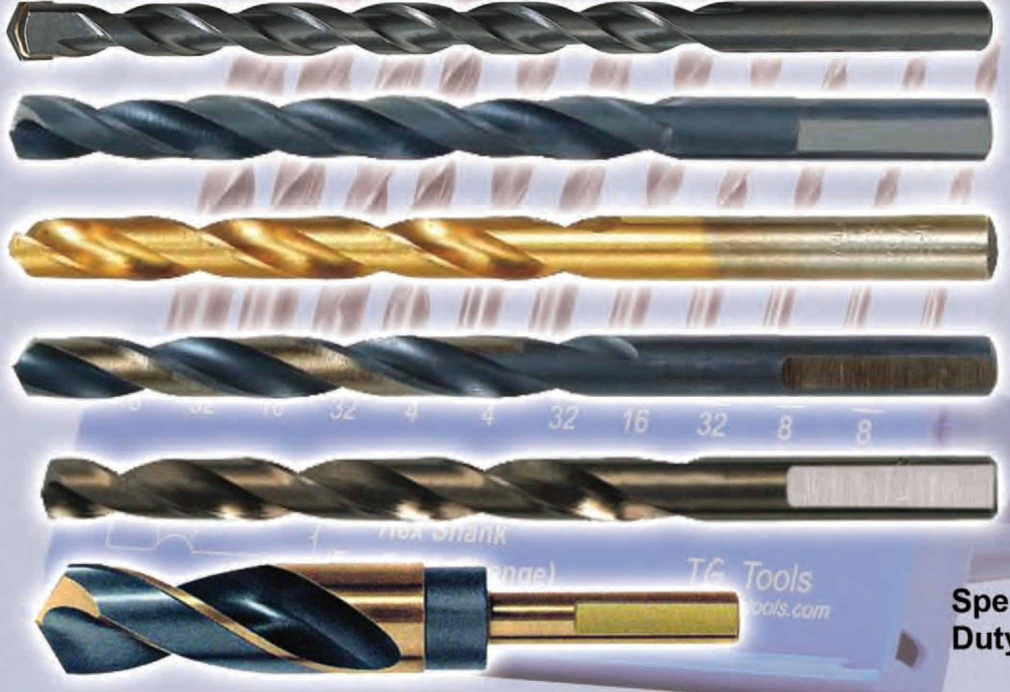
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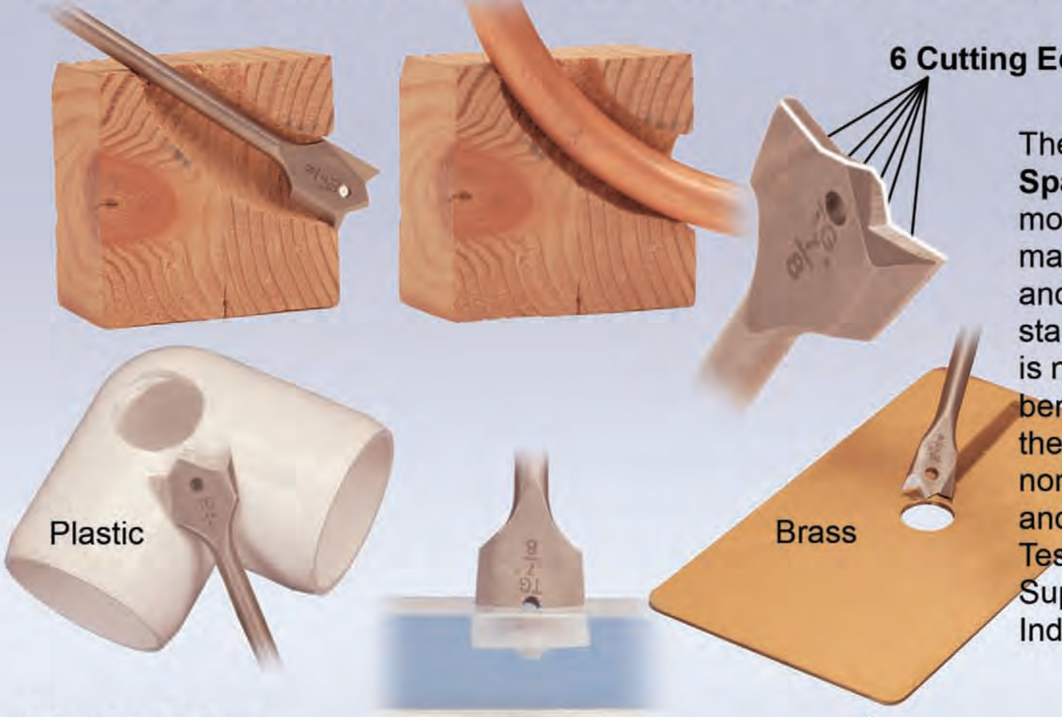

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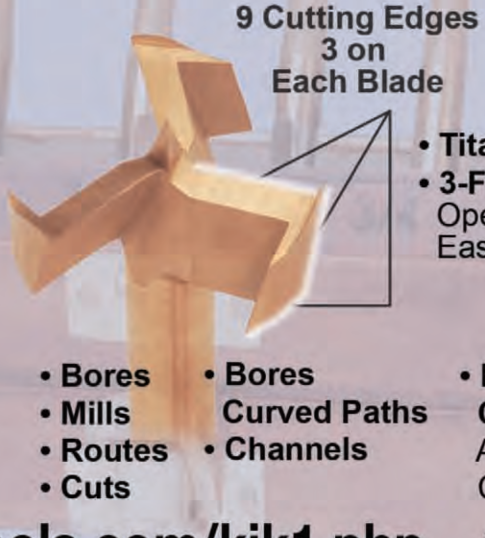

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CONTENTS

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FEATURES

30 Down and Done
Professional Advice on Transforming a Room with Engineered Hardwood Flooring

46 Fresh Coats
A Case Study of Repainting Exterior Metal Siding, featuring New Tools and Materials

60 Hex Deck
Building a Hexagonal Conversation Nook for a Deck

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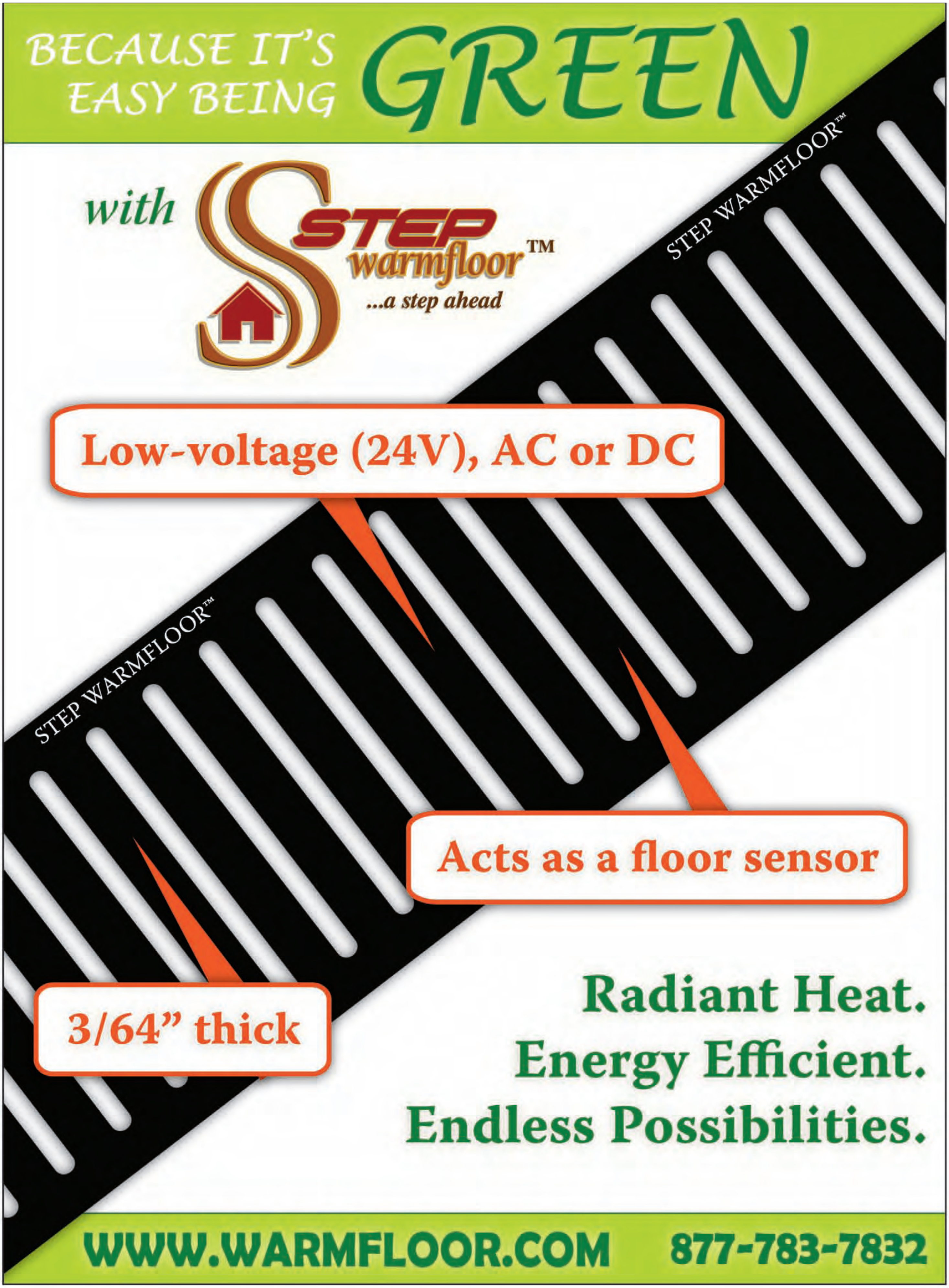
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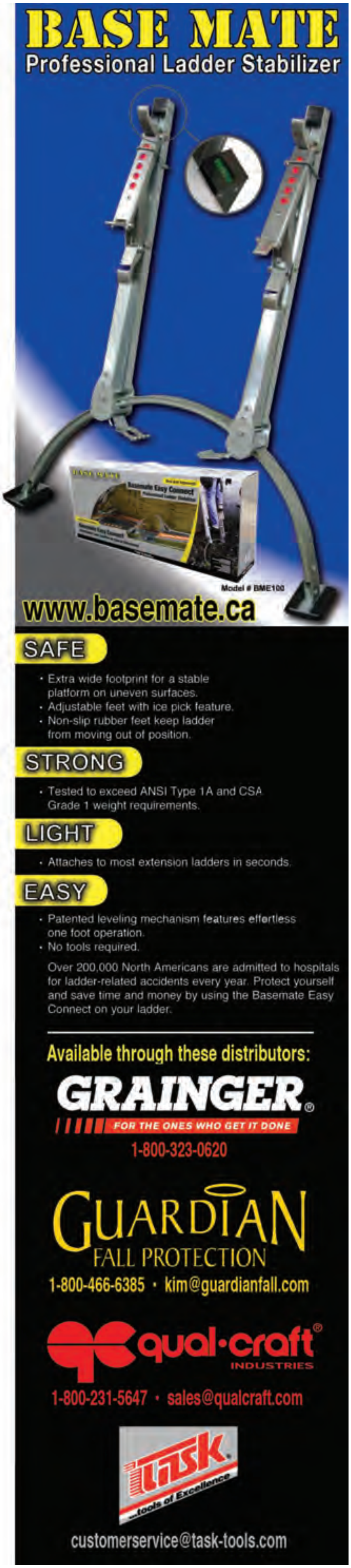

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CONTENTS

EVERY ISSUE

8 **From the Editor**

95 **Advertisers Index**

COLUMNS

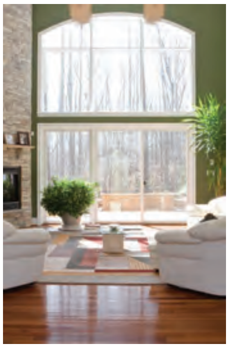
10 **Q & A**

14 **Tool School**
Sorting out Sanders for the DIY'er

DEPARTMENTS

76 **Do-It-Yourself**
101 Window Tips

98 **Hot Products**



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LETTER

From The Editor-In-Chief

I've mentioned in these letters that I really dislike working on automobiles. Sadly, the dang things keep breaking, so I'm stuck doing it anyway. Recently, my pickup truck decided it didn't want to start anymore. I enlisted my auto-whiz father to help me diagnose the problem, which turned out to be the Idle Air Control Valve.

On my truck, the Idle Air Control Valve is located on the throttle body, right beneath the dashboard. Only two star-drive screws held the thing in place, so it would seem like an easy fix, but its location left no clearance for a screwdriver. I was able to use an articulating socket wrench fitted with a star-drive bit to remove one of them, but a high-pressure fuel line behind the second screw left no room for the wrench. This type of aggravation is why I really don't like auto repair (have I mentioned that?).

It seemed that I needed a small L-shaped driver like a hex key—only with a star-drive tip. Well, after visiting four different auto parts stores, I finally found such a tool at NAPA, but it was only sold in a set with several other tools, and the kit cost about $45. That would amount to spending a whopping $45 to remove a single screw. That's like raising a white flag, conceding victory to the screw. No way.

So, I got creative. I found a hex key roughly 1/4-inch in size, and used an electric grinder to shape the short end into a 1/4-inch square drive. I plugged a 1/4-inch socket on its end to hold a small star-drive bit. It was still too long, so I ground off about half an inch from the short side of the "L," and *voila*—that made my makeshift tool fit, finally. And, because the socket and bit kept falling apart and disappearing into the engine well, I decided to stick the pieces together temporarily with bubble gum. It worked; I was able to pop off the valve, insert the new one and replace the screws in practically no time.

The catch is that Dad stopped by later and showed me that by removing four bolts and a couple of cables, I could have pulled off the throttle body in a matter of minutes for easy access to the valve.

I know there's bound to be lots of similar stories floating around where DIY'ers have gone to dubious lengths to solve a problem, only to have someone point out to you later that you did it the hard way. I'd like to hear them. If you've got a story to share, visit our How-To Forum at www.extremehowto.com and tell us about it.

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Q: *Our concrete driveway has an old piece of lumber used to form an expansion joint. The lumber has rotted away. What's the best way to replace the joint?*

A: Use a chisel or putty knife to remove the rotted wood. Sweep the dust and debris out of the seam with a wet/dry vac. Then, pack a strip of foam backer rod into the seam to allow some shifting of the concrete to help prevent cracking. Run the backer rod from one end of the joint to the other. Finally, seal the joint using a caulking gun and a tube of polyurethane sealant. Allow the sealant to fully cure before contact.

……

Q: *Is there any difference in procedure between installing a picture rail and a chair rail?*

A: Installing a picture rail is basically the same procedure as installing a chair rail. Picture rails are usually installed from 10 to 16 inches below the ceiling, depending on the height of the wall. Picture rails allow pictures, tapestries and other objects to be hung without hammering nails into the wall. They also serve as a decorative trim element. Most picture rails have a cove milled along the top edge that holds special hardware for supporting picture wire. Whether it's intended to hang objects or only to serve as a design element, it should be securely screwed to the studs, with the screws countersunk, filled with putty and painted or stained to match the rail.

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Q. *When trying to replace a toilet, I stripped the nut that bolts the toilet to the flange. How do I get this off?*

A. First, give the nut and bolt a generous squirt with some penetrating oil and allow it a couple of minutes to penetrate any corrosion that may be seizing the threads. If that doesn't loosen it enough to spin off with pliers, then find yourself a mini hacksaw. Use a towel or tape to protect the porcelain toilet base and saw a vertical cut in the nut at a slight angle until you've created a fairly deep groove. Insert a flat-head screwdriver into the groove and twist it to break the nut.

……

Q. *How does a split-jamb door work?*

A. Prehung split-jamb doors are designed for situations where an interior wall's rough frame is thicker than a standard opening, and a standard size prehung jamb won't fit. Split-jamb doors have a two-piece jamb that is separated lengthwise and sandwiches the wall between the two pieces. When installing, set the unhinged side in the room with the hinge-stop side in the opening track. The casing is already attached to split-jamb doors, so tack a nail through the casing near the top. Shim the door as necessary to keep it plumb and square, and nail through the jamb, securing it to the door frame with finishing nails. Install the other slip of the door on the opposite side of the wall, pushing it into position until the casing reaches the wall. Nail through both halves of the jamb into the center stop. Nail the casing to the wall and fill all nails holes with putty. **EHT**

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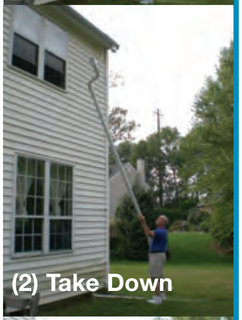

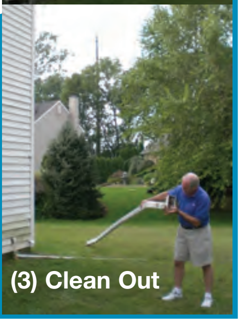

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Sorting out Sanders for the DIY'er

Hand sanders give the user complete control of sanding speed and pressure for a wide range of shaping and finishing chores. Shown is a variety of ergonomic Zip sanders from Ali Industries.

By Matt Weber

The technical term for smoothing wood flat prior to finishing is "abrading," but most DIY'ers know the process by the layman's term, "sanding." From removing paint to polishing grain for wood stain, sanding is an indispensable DIY skill.

The abrasive particles in sandpaper are graded and numbered as "grit," indicating how coarse or fine the particles are, which directly correlates to the paper's ability to scrape away material. Sandpaper with very coarse grits in the 50 to 60 range is ideal for heavy shaping and material removal, such as stripping away old finishes or thinning the stock. Medium grits ranging from 120 to 180 can be used for light shaping and finishing. Fine grits from 220 to 280 are suitable for smoothing the wood for the application of a finishing product like paint or stain. And the very finest grits range from 320 to 600, ideal for final finishing, taking off sharp edges, and sanding between coats of varnish.

A good approach for a DIY'er is to select three grits to have handy. Start with the sandpaper that's just coarse enough to remove the worst surface defects. Using too coarse a grit risks leaving deep scratches in the wood, which requires more fine sanding later. Use too fine a grit, and you'll be sanding forever. An 80-grit sandpaper is usually a good place to start. However, coarse grits will leave fine scratches on the wood, so the next step is to turn these large scratches into smaller scratches with a finer paper of around 120-grit. For the final sanding phase, a 220-grit sandpaper will work for most types of wood. Wood with dense grain may require finer grits, like 320-grit to remove the last of the scratches, resulting in a smooth, ready-to-finish surface.

The tools that hold the sandpaper come in a wide range of shapes and sizes, all with specific intended applications. Here's a rundown of what's available.

MANUAL HAND SANDERS

Obviously, using a hand sander is slower and more labor intensive than using a powered sander, but it's quiet, generates less dust and gives the user complete control of the sanding action. Rather than using a folded piece of sandpaper and rubbing with your fingers, you'll get better results from a sanding block. A sanding block distributes the pressure evenly over the working surface of the tool for a flatter finish, whereas finger pressure can result in uneven grooves where pressure was concentrated only at the fingertips.

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Generally, it's best to sand with the grain of the wood to eliminate cross-grain scratches. In some applications, such as removing deep scratches or removing a finish, you will achieve faster material removal by sanding across the grain at a 45-degree angle, but expect a lot of cleanup sanding to remove the inevitable scratch marks. When sanding with a block, use firm but not excessive pressure. Let the abrasive grit do the work, and change the paper often—this holds true for any type of sanding tool. Another good rule of thumb is to finish up a sanding job by using a fine-grit paper to soften the edges of the work piece. Create a tiny bevel to eliminate sharp edges on wooden objects, which reduces the risk of splintering and nicks. Only use a hand sander—not a powered sander—to soften the edges.

On a smooth, non-grained surface such as metal, move the sandpaper in small circular motions.

ORBITAL SANDERS

Powered orbital sanders, also called pad sanders, are available in models that use 1/2-, 1/4- or 1/3-sheets of sandpaper. Depending on the model, you can attach the sandpaper to the sanding pad with hook-and-loop fasteners, use precut sheets with peel-and-stick backing, or simply cut a sheet of sandpaper to size and attach it with clamps at the front and rear. Some models require two hands to operate, while smaller models, called palm sanders, require only one. Both types move in a slight circular pattern, which feels like they are vibrating, and should be used

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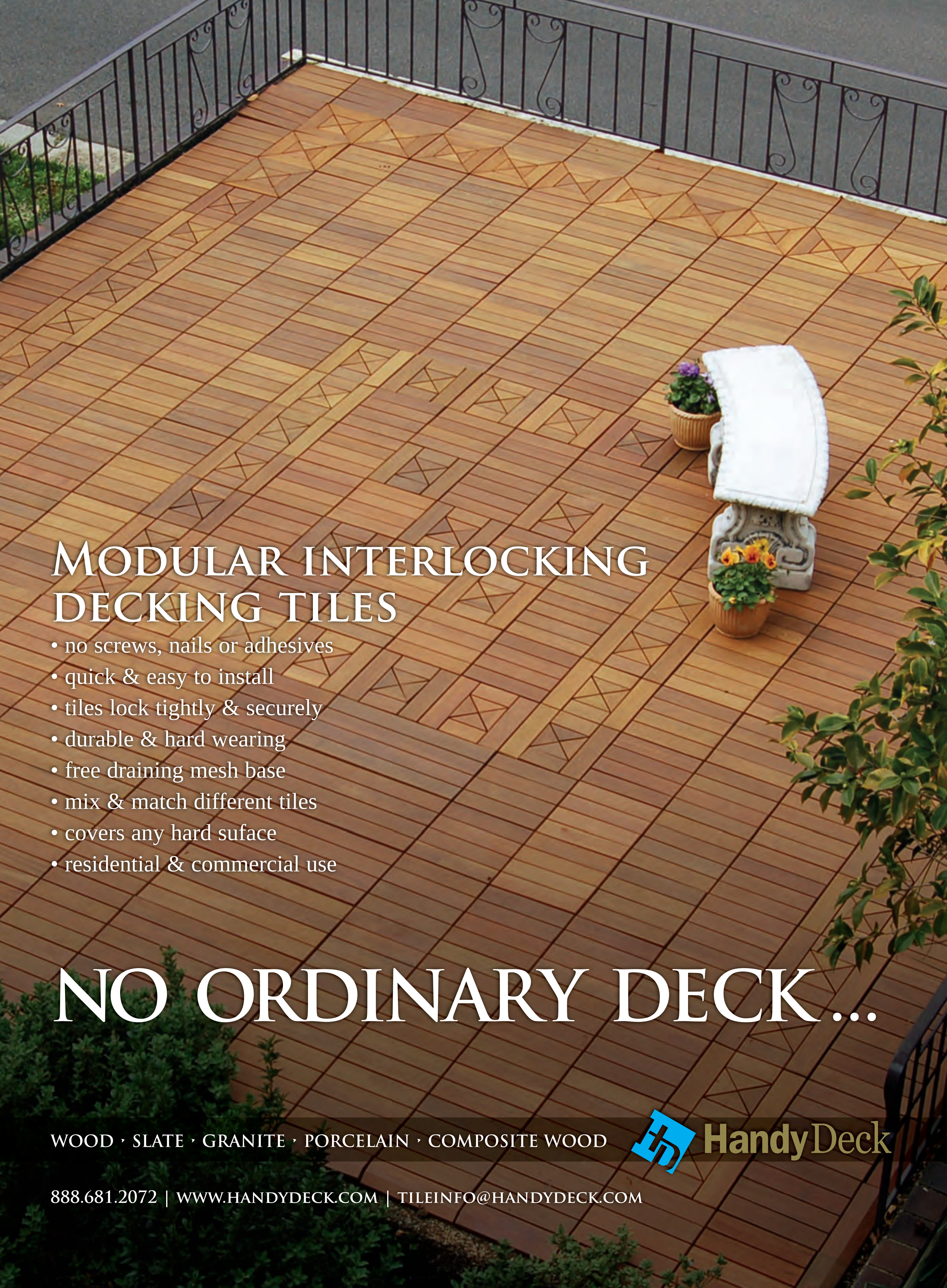

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in the same direction as the wood grain to avoid scratching the stock. When selecting a sander, look for a palm sander that has a dust-collection device or a hookup for a vacuum system to help maintain air quality in the work area. Also, by sanding in a circular pattern the grit crosses the wood grain, which generally leaves tiny swirl marks on the surface. Before applying a finish, these swirled scratches need to be hand-sanded out in the same direction as the grain.

RANDOM-ORBIT SANDERS

Among the most popular hand sanders are random-orbit sanders that utilize a circular sanding pad. The unique motion of a random-orbit sander operates by rotating the sanding disk while the whole pad simultaneously moves in an oval pattern. This creates a random sanding

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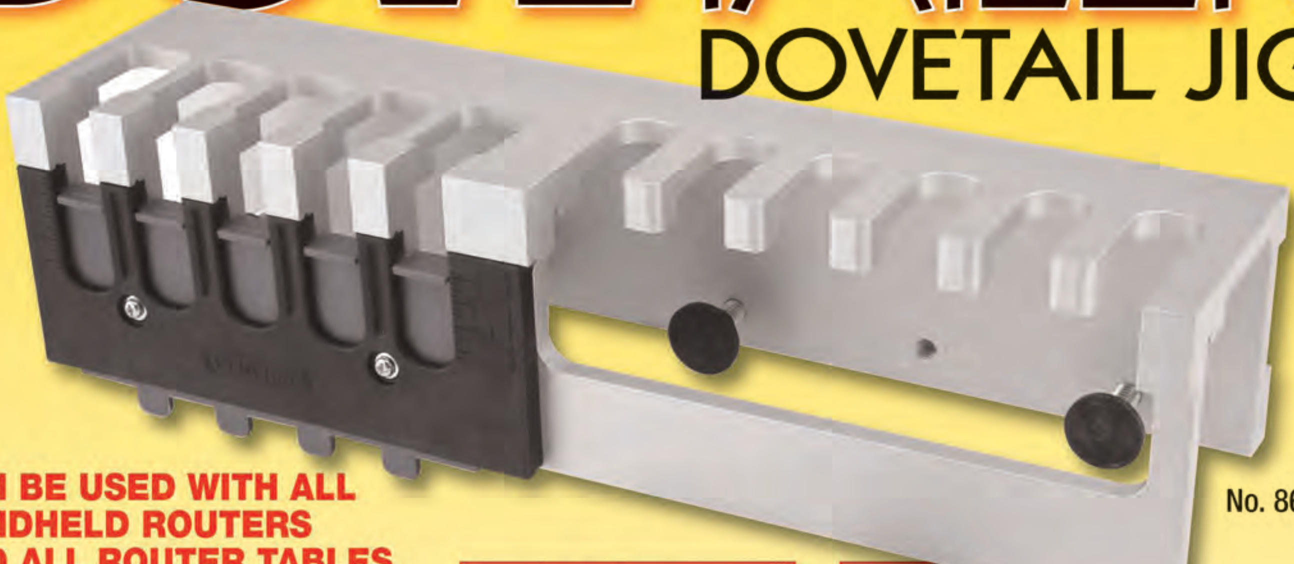

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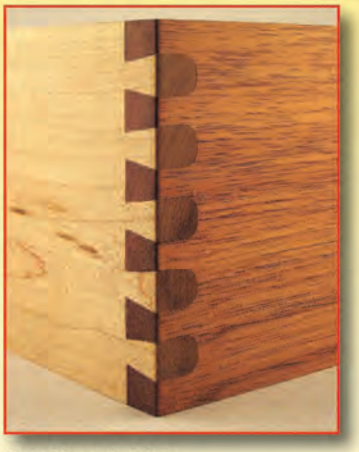

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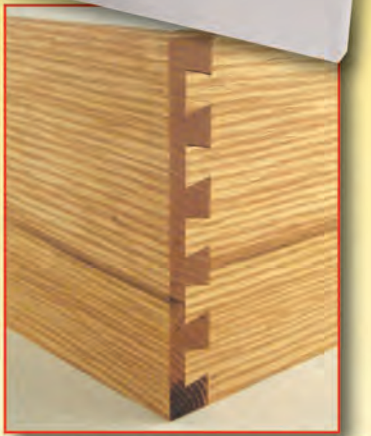

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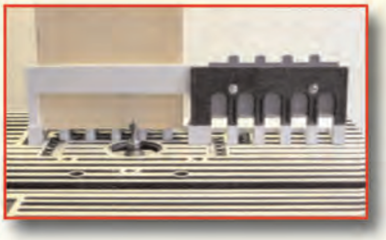

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pattern so the abrasive particles never follow the same path to minimize scratches. Random-orbit sanders are excellent tools to remove finishes and prep the wood for final sanding. Five- and 6-inch models are available, with 5-inch being the most popular for DIY'ers. Most models feature integrated dust control because the action of the tool will kick up a lot of dust. Also, look for

The random sanding pattern of random-orbit sanders minimizes scratches because the abrasive particles never follow the same path.

The Craftsman Professional Vibrafree random-orbit sander features a pair of uniquely designed counter-balance pads that always move in opposite directions to each other. This keeps vibration to a minimum for easier control and less user fatigue.

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PORTER CABLE	PSA 1$^1/_2$" x 2$^1/_2$" Sheet for Profile Grit 80, 220	$2/20
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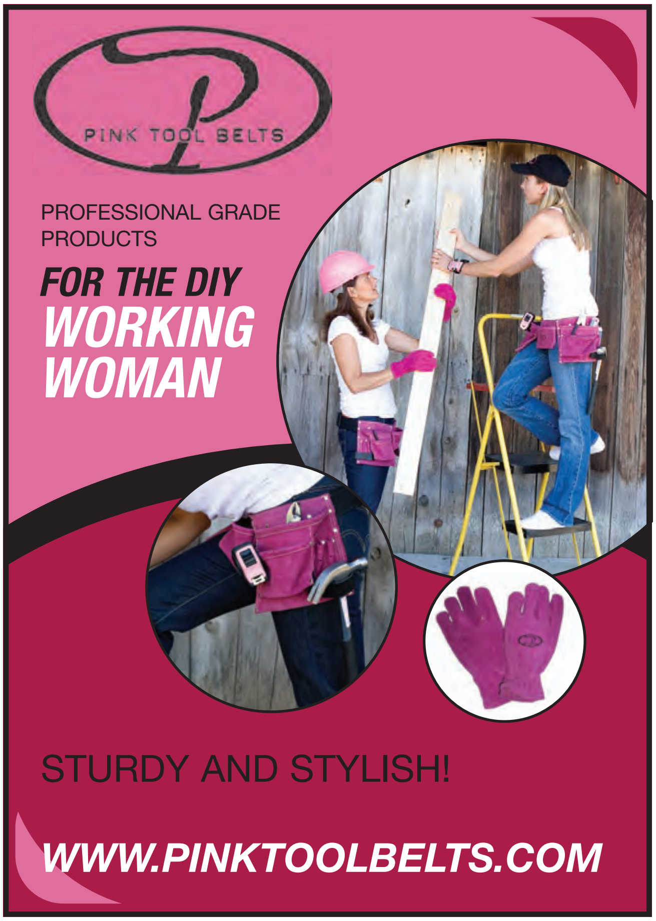
variable speed control to help match the sanding speed to the application at hand.

Random orbit sanders do have limitations. For one thing, the circular pad means it can't access enclosed square corners, such as the inside of a shelf. Additionally, while random-orbits work more quickly than other vibrating power sanders, they can't remove material as aggressively as a belt sander for those heavy-duty chores.

BELT SANDERS

Belt sanders are the real beasts of the bunch when it comes to fast, aggressive material removal. Much like a handheld, portable version of a small benchtop sander, these powered sanders feature a continuous loop or belt of abrasive paper that stretches across two wheels at the front and back. The belt spins and removes stock for quick work on the initial phases of rough sanding jobs.

Belt sanders use a continuous loop or belt of abrasive paper for fast, aggressive material removal. The latest models feature advanced track technology to keep the belt in line during operation.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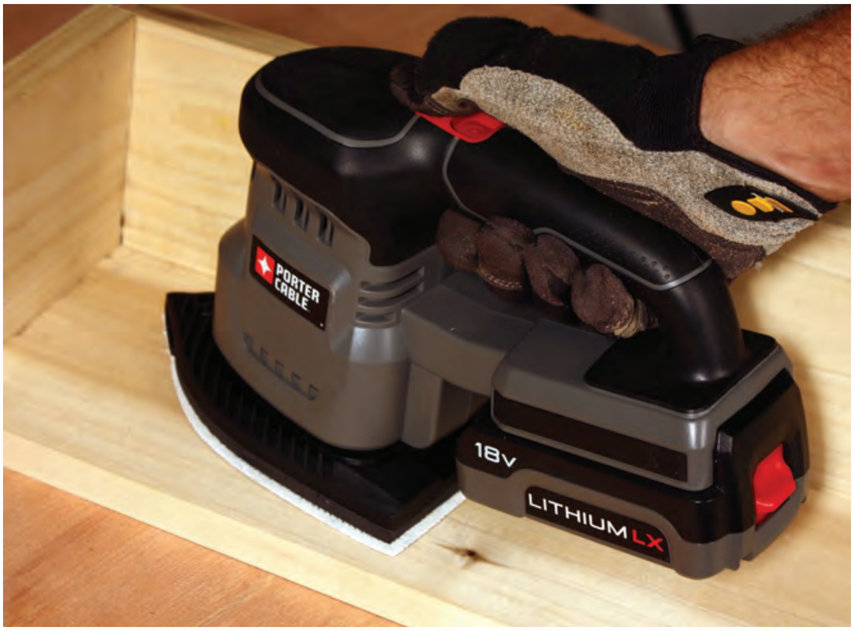
Since belt sanders remove a lot of material at a rapid rate, some have variable speed controls that enable the operator to adjust the sander to run at a more comfortable level. However, never use a belt sander for finish work, as the action is simply too aggressive and you'll likely do more harm than good to the work piece. That fast spinning belt also works like a spinning tire pulling the tool forward, which can make these models tough to control and unsuitable for delicate sanding operations.

When operating a belt sander, use both hands and move around the workpiece to prevent digging a divot in a single spot. Work the sander at an angle to the grain of the wood to rapidly remove a lot of material. Or,



Some models of palm sanders have a bullet-shaped abrasive pad with a pointed nose for detail work and to access tight spaces and inside corners.

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position it parallel to the grain to minimize scratches. Note: Always make sure the trigger is OFF before plugging in a belt sander, otherwise the sander may make like a tiny dragster and launch across the table or room, until it crashes into some object or jerks the cord out of its socket.

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Walk-behind floor sanders are like belt sanders on steroids. They remove finishes, scratches and dents by aggressively sanding away the surface material at a rapid rate. Floor sanders are large and expensive, but can be rented by the DIY'er to avoid investing in the high cost of the tool.

DETAIL SANDERS, DREMELS AND OSCILLATING TOOLS

Some models of palm sanders have a bullet-shaped abrasive pad with a pointed nose for detail work and to access tight spaces and inside corners. Some detail sanders, sometimes

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Porter-Cable has introduced a new 18-volt lithium-ion cordless detail sander featuring a detachable detail finger and boasting the highest stock removal rate in its class.

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referred to as contour sanders, can be fitted with specially shaped interchangeable pads for sanding edges and rounds on non-flat surfaces.

Rotary tools, such as a Dremel, can also be outfitted as detail sanders for sanding around odd shapes and small nooks in woodwork. When equipped with small sanding drums they are frequently used for craft projects and millwork, such as window and door casings. Detail sanders are available in corded and cordless models and usually come with multiple attachments.

Rockwell's SoniCrafter oscillating tool is available with a variety of sanding and polishing attachments for work with wood, plastic and hardened fillers.

Among the most versatile types of power tools are the multi-function oscillating tools popularized by the Fein Multimaster. These days a variety of manufacturers, including Bosch, Rockwell and Craftsman, are running with the concept of these multipurpose devices, which do everything from scrape and grind to flush-cut and sand. Such tools generally come with a variety of attachments for removing floor covering and adhesive residue, and usually include hook-and-loop sanding

FUZZY, WAS IT?

After you've sanded a wood surface smooth for finishing, wipe it with a damp cloth and let it dry. This not only removes dust, but the moisture will raise the grain of the wood, making the surface feel fuzzy. Then sand away the fuzz. This extra step reduces the likelihood that the finishing product itself will raise the grain and affect the look and texture of the wood.

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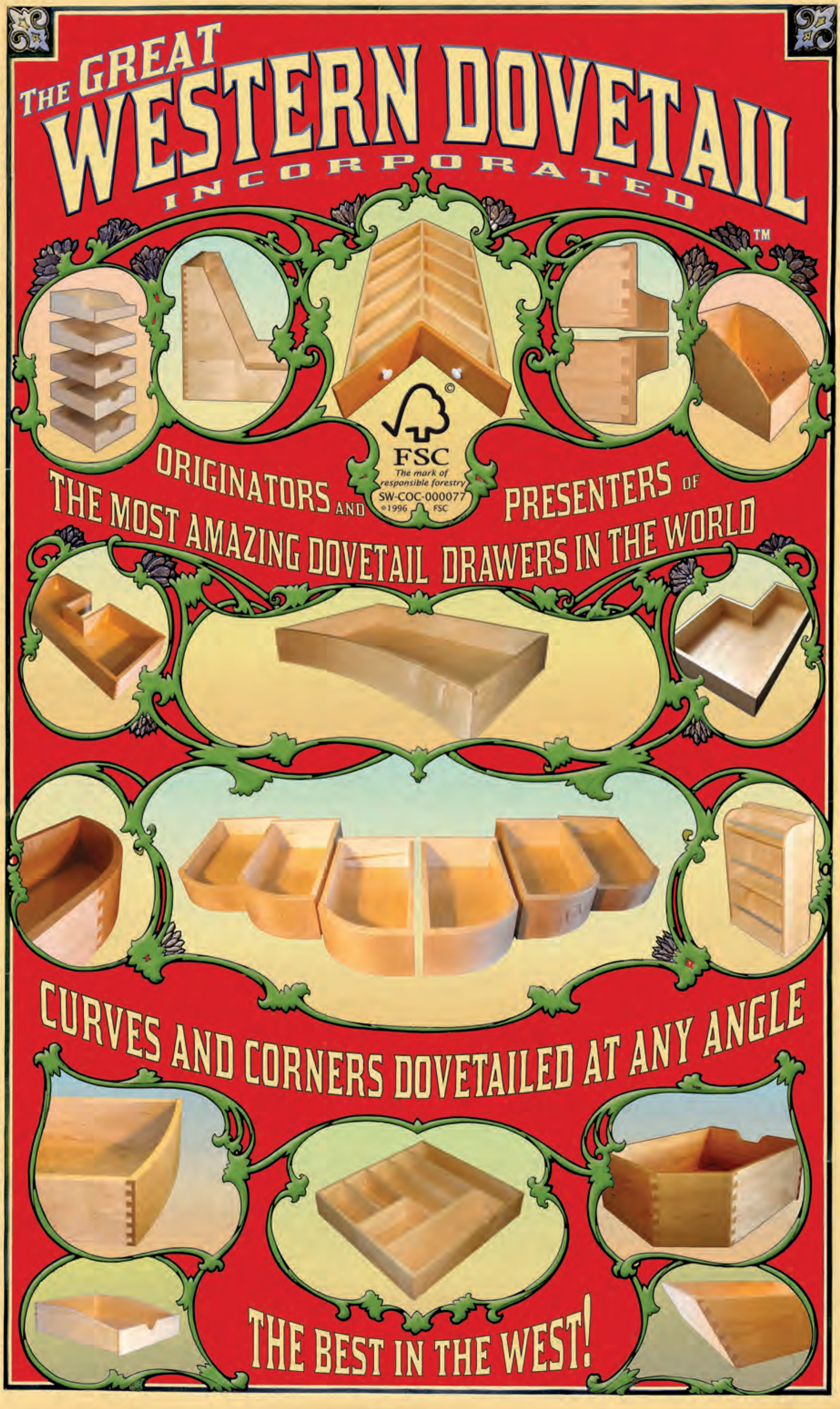

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Rotary tools, such as the cordless Powersmith Mag Lith-ion Compact Hobby Tool, can be equipped for detail sanding applications.

When fitted with small sanding drums, rotary tools can be used on craft projects and millwork, like window and door casings.

plates for both rough and smooth sanding tasks.

DRILLS AND DISCS

For rough sanding and scouring rust from metal, several sanding accessories are available with a post that fits into the chuck of an electric drill. Sanding disks are available in 4- and 6-inch versions with a soft rubber face that can be fitted with a round piece of sandpaper. Another useful tool is a wire brush, similar to what's often mounted on a bench grinder. Stiff wire brushes spread in a circle around a hub and operate similar to an abrasive paint brush.

When using a drill for sanding, use one hand around the motor and the other around the handle for best control. Only use the drill periodically, allowing it to rest

PAPER TRAIL

Not all sandpapers are created equal. Here's a rundown of what's available for your next project.

Aluminum Oxide—The most common type of sandpaper is aluminum oxide. This is a good choice for smoothing and shaping wood, available in a wide variety of grits, usually brown or gray in color. Aluminum oxide is hard and sharp, and it fragments as it cuts, which renews the sanding surface.

Zirconium Oxide—The "new kid on the block" is zirconium oxide sandpaper, commonly known as cubic zirconium. Zirconium oxide has a diamond-like quality that is harder and sharper than standard aluminum oxide, so it cuts faster and holds its cutting edge longer.

Silicon Oxide—Silicon oxide sandpaper is usually black and glued on a waterproof backing for wet-sanding applications. Water is washed over the surface of the work piece, clearing away dust that can clog the abrasive to prevent heat buildup. Silicon oxide is available in finer grits, generally 400 and up, used for sanding non-wood surfaces, such as metal and stone, to a glassy finish.

Garnet Sandpaper—Typically reddish orange in color, garnet sandpaper cuts slower than other abrasives. Because it tends to burnish the surface, garnet sandpaper is best for prepping wood prior to finishing so the wood more evenly absorbs stain.

Emery Cloth—Emery cloth uses black emery abrasive adhered to a fabric backing so it remains flexible. The abrasive grit removes paint and corrosion from metal surfaces, while the finer grits clean and polish. Emery cloth is often used to prepare copper pipe before soldering.

Sanding Screens—Generally used for finishing drywall joints, sanding screens are a coarse fiberglass mesh covered with abrasive material. The drywall dust passes through the holes in the screen to prevent clogging, and the screens can be renewed by washing with water.

and cool. Some drills may not be designed for sustained heavy-duty load, in which case you should opt for an electric angle grinder or a dedicated disk sander.

Abrasive power tools also have uses beyond wood prep and paint removal. Bench grinders, for example, feature an abrasive wheel for grinding and shaping a variety of materials, including tool-sharpening applications. Similar in concept but unique in design and engineering is the Work Sharp tool sharpening system. The Work Sharp utilizes a high-speed abrasive disc on a glass wheel, as well as an air-cooled abrasive port, to sharpen a wide variety of tools. This unique system sharpens everything from chisels and flat blades to lathe tools, carving tools, scrapers, putty knives and more. It’s just one more example of today’s sanding technology expanding and evolving to meet the growing demands of pros and DIY’ers alike. **EHT**

Resources

Craftsman
www.craftsman.com

Porter-Cable
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Powersmith Mag Lith-ion
www.maglithion.com

Rockwell
www.rockwelltools.com

Skil
www.skiltools.com

Tyler Tool
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WORK SHARP
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DOWN AND DONE

by Larry Walton

Professional Advice on Transforming a Room with Engineered Hardwood Flooring

It's so fun to tackle a home improvement project that produces a dramatic transformation in a few short hours. This is especially true when you've been living with less than desirable conditions for a while.

When I first saw John and Rachelle's living room floor it was looking a bit funky. It was a look I well recognized. A project started.

John had started demolition on a tile entry floor. He also made a cut in the carpet where he intended to make a new floor break along with the new entry floor. That's when things in his business took off. Good for biz, not so good for the home project. So, he called me in to finish the job, which, of course, took me away from a project I had going on at my own house!

We talked about some flooring options and especially what could be done quickly and lived on immediately, which brought us to options in prefinished hardwood and finally to engineered hardwood, which installs much like laminate but is real wood on the surface.

They went down the street, picked out a color, and then we picked up the material and installed it.

UNFURNISHED WORK SPACE

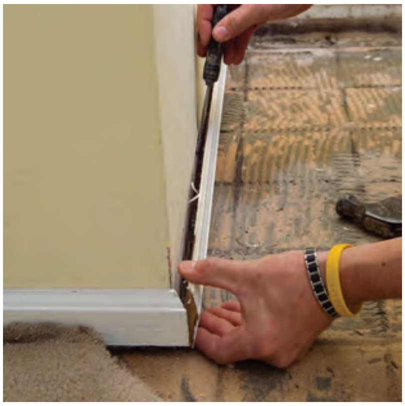
Got a flooring project? Move the furniture. In fact, it's best to also clear out the adjacent room so you have a place to keep tools and materials handy and out of the way.

We sometimes put furniture in the garage, but not if we have to run power tools there. If weather permits, the driveway can work. Also, consider a moving truck or trailer where things can be secured. The main idea is to get the stuff "out the way."

Remove all furniture before beginning.

Once we had removed all the furniture, we pulled the baseboards. I recommend that you begin the process of removing baseboard by cutting the caulk along the top of the trim so when you pull it off of the wall it won't tear the face of the drywall. With this done you can use a stiff blade putty knife to start the separation of trim and wall. Carefully bend the boards out and maintain pressure until they pop out of place.

Because we were working in an area that had wall-to-wall carpet throughout, we needed to establish a floor break, or transition, where the new hardwood flooring would meet the existing carpet.



A stiff blade putty knife is a good tool for getting behind baseboards for removal.

Pull nails through the back of a piece of baseboard to avoid damaging the face.

We then cut the carpet a little inside the area where the new flooring would be. The idea here is to have extra carpet that you can cut precisely to the new floor when the hardwood is done.

We folded the carpet back onto itself and put a couple of strips of wood down, which we tacked into position.

Next, we pulled out the old carpet. You can begin this task with a pair of pliers to grab the carpet in one of the corners. Once started, grab it and growl, but not too loudly. Peel it back towards the center of the room and pay attention to how the carpet is folding back along the walls. Don't get too carried away and scratch things up.

The back of the carpeting is actually quite abrasive. Once your carpet is folded and ready to go out the door, be careful not to drag it against door jambs, across casings or on the paint of your truck when loading.

Next step is to remove the carpet pad. Most of the time it's tacked down with light-gauge staples and is easy to remove. Go about it systematically by rolling it up.

With the carpet and pad gone, it's time to take out the carpet tack strips. Got any leather work gloves? As you can see, the strips have nails sticking out like porcupine quills. A stiff-blade chisel or a flat bar work well to get under the strips to pry them up.

Cut back the carpet in a location that is somewhat inside the new flooring area.

Fold the carpet back and tack it into place for the duration of the hardwood floor installation.

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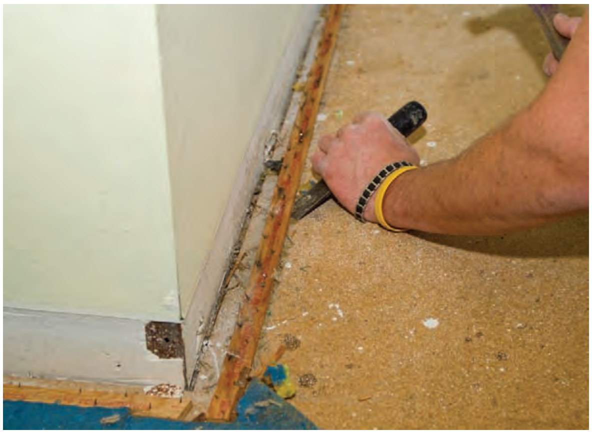
EX.HT3.10

With carpet, pad and strips removed, give attention to getting everything cleaned up. There will likely be staples from the carpet pad and nails left over from the carpet tack strips. I like to use a scraper to clear the light-gauge staples. Larger nails require hammer claws or pliers. Sometimes it makes sense to drive nails in flush.

Carpet pad can usually be rolled up as it's being removed.



A chisel, flat bar or putty knife can be used to pry up carpet tack strips from the subfloor.

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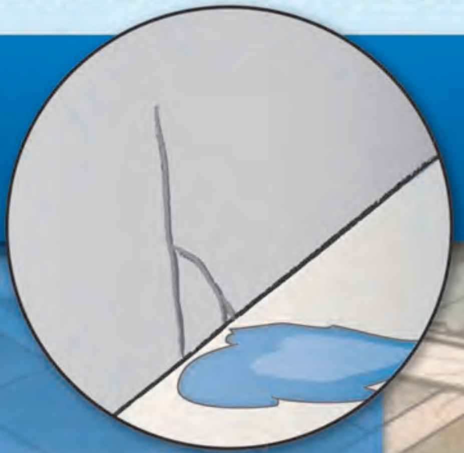

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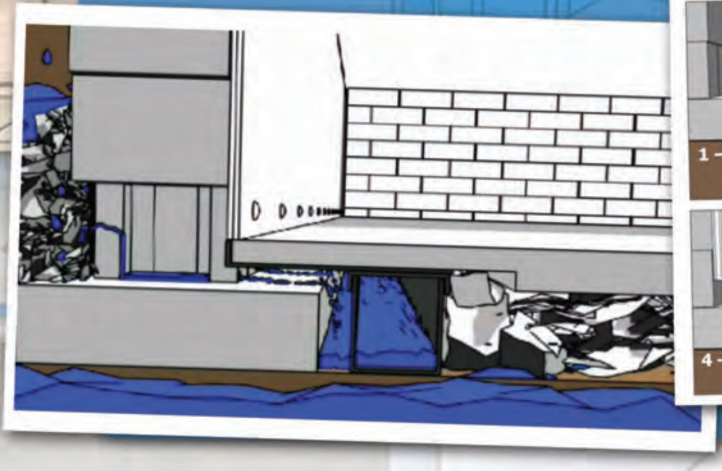

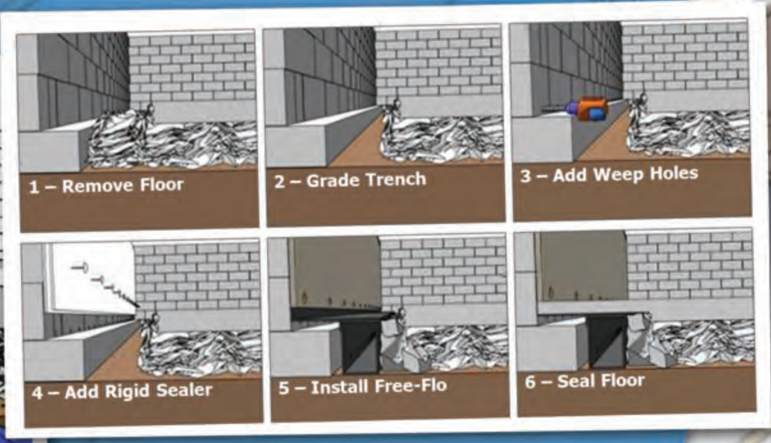

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On our project, we had to deal with pieces of tile and thinset mortar. Identify whatever needs to be scraped, pulled and removed to get a clean, smooth floor surface.

SITE SURVEY

Once we had our flooring area cleaned we turned our attention to the layout, beginning with the geometry of the room. This step is often overlooked, which can create problems with the finished look of the project. It really gets down to how the flooring fits the room. The same is true of tile and vinyl floors with patterns. Problems occur when walls are not straight and rooms are not square. The discoveries you make in this survey of the room can help you make decisions that will hide imperfections in the room.

Here are some scenarios where such problems can occur:

- You start installing your flooring in a small area only to find out as you progress that the longer walls in the main room are not parallel to or square with the small area where you started. You already have notches cut for doors and floor vents, which make a simple shifting of the floating floor a tough solution.

- You begin with full boards along the far wall and arrive at the opposite wall to find that awkward cuts are needed, which leave partial boards in a very visible part of the room. In retrospect, the cuts should have been made across the room where furniture is certain to camouflage the narrow boards.

- You start your install and discover that a conspicuous section of wall has a nasty curve in it, which becomes quite visible next to the new, straight flooring. Had you known the wall issue was there, you would have rotated your layout 90 degrees so the end cuts would occur at the crooked wall.

We used straight edges, chalk lines and measuring tapes to check the different walls in the room to determine which ones were parallel with each other,

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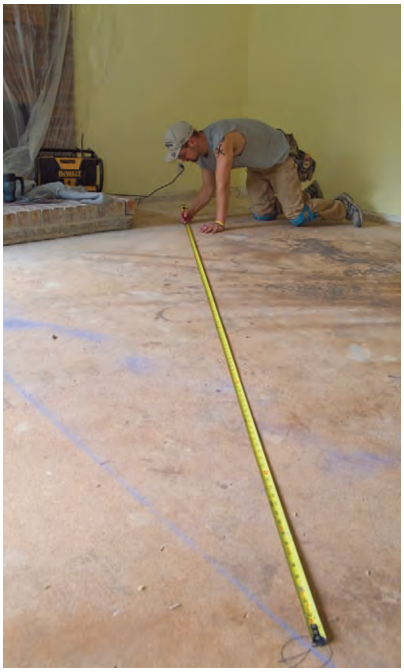
Take time to establish some layout lines before beginning the hardwood floor install.

which ones were square with each other, and if there were any crooked walls in the mix.

The standard is to run the flooring perpendicular to any subfloor composed of lumber such as tongue-and-groove car decking. If you're going over a subfloor or underlayment made of sheet material such as plywood, the structural requirements are not the same, which means you can run the flooring in either direction.

In our case, we found that an open wall in the main room was quite crooked, so we decided to run the flooring into, rather than along, this crooked wall to camouflage the problem.

Now that you have the floor surface cleared of all fasteners, the floor repairs are done and you've decided which direction you're going to run your hardwood flooring, it's time to start rolling out the foam insulation

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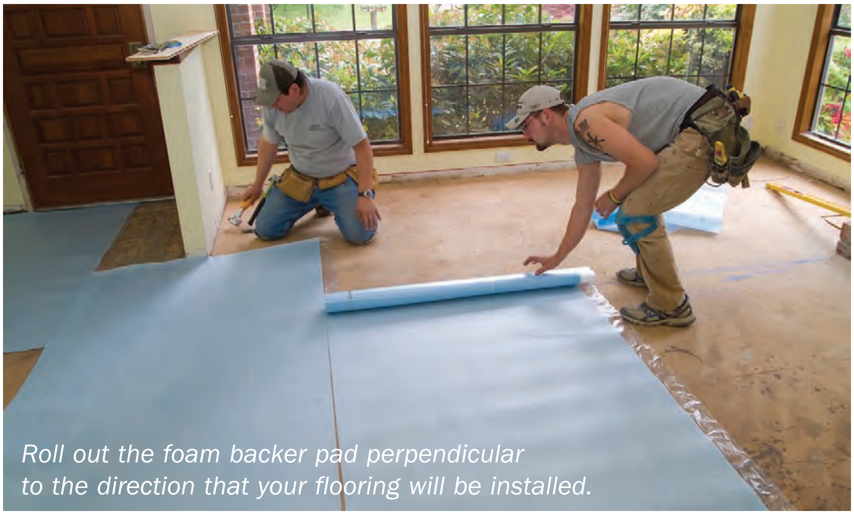
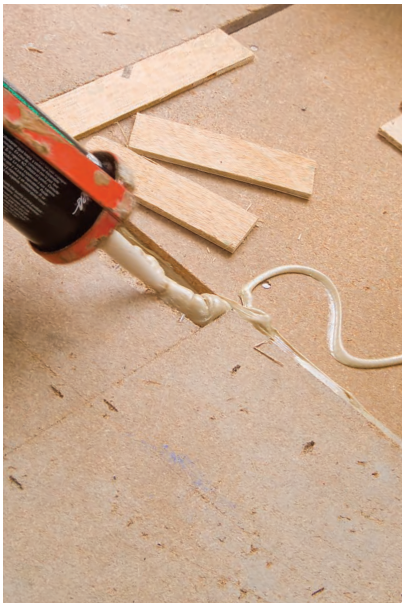
H3OF2

backer that goes under this type of floating floor. Roll it out so the long edges are perpendicular to the flooring material. This foam backer operates as a vapor barrier, as a cushion and as a sound insulation. This material tends to be very stretchy, so watch for any bumps or folds that start developing and try to keep everything flat without stretching it too much. Use a hammer tacker to staple the underlayment pad in place.



Roll out the foam backer pad perpendicular to the direction that your flooring will be installed.



A combination of construction adhesive and flat shims or tapered shims can be a good way to get low areas up to the finish grade.

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REFERENCE LINES

Use a chalk line to mark a vertical and a horizontal line through the main part of the room. These lines should take into account the information you got from your survey of the room. They will give you the best opportunity to keep the flooring oriented so the pattern fits the room. They help you keep everything parallel as you start across the room with the flooring.

DIRECTION

Decide where to start. Sometimes it's like reading a page in a book, starting at the top and going left to right. Think about the sort of obstacles that are in the room. If I start on this side of the room then I'm going to be backing up in this

We started with a full board in front of the door so there were no head seams right at the door opening.

SUBPAR SUBFLOORS

Often it's necessary to make subfloor repairs before you install your flooring. While an engineered hardwood floor can handle going over minor gaps and low spots in the floor, it's really preferable to have everything on the floor as flat as possible. In our particular case, the repairs that were made before the carpet was laid weren't suitable for our new flooring. Use a long straightedge to determine which areas need to be taken down or built up in elevation. We had a couple of low spots on our project. We used a combination of construction adhesive and flat shims to get the flooring level.

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direction. Or, what makes the most sense to get around this little half wall or to get around the fireplace hearth? How will this affect the flow of the work and the location of my tools? Where would I like to be as I finish the install? It's sort of like trying to avoid painting yourself into a corner.

We began our install at the entry door. We started with the groove against the beginning wall and the tongue out towards us, which determined the way all of the pieces snapped together from there.

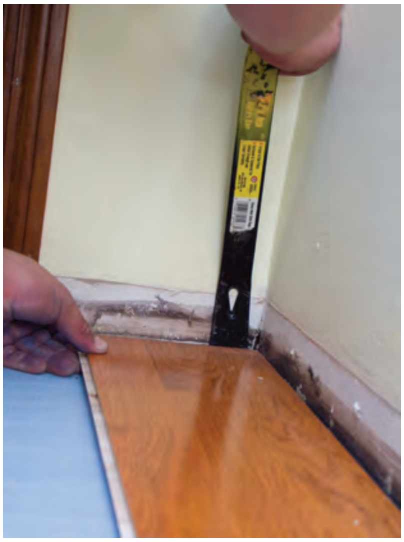
GETTING STARTED

Take the first couple of pieces, put them in position and snap the head joints together. Once you get three or four pieces put together, measure out to your reference line in the middle of the room to make sure that they are parallel to that line. At this point you can still shift things around because nothing is fastened to the subfloor.

STAGGER WITHOUT STUMBLING

Unlike random lengths commonly found in standard hardwood flooring, engineered flooring boards are usually all the same length. This means you'll need to measure to ensure the head joints of one row do not line up with the head joints of adjacent rows. Usually this can be accomplished by starting every other row with an off-fall scrap that ended a previous row.

A miter saw with enough cut width is the right tool to cut engineered hardwood flooring to length.

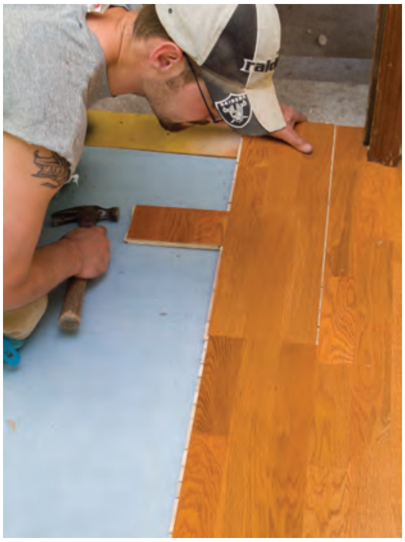

A flat bar can be used to pry the boards away from the wall to close the head joint gaps.

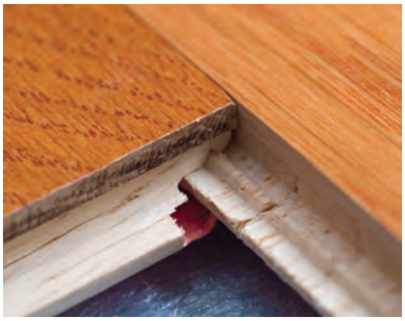
The advantage of uniform lengths is that once you've started a row with a staggered head joint, the pattern will automatically repeat across the room. When you are using random length boards you must constantly watch for aligning head joints during the install.

In short, every time you start a new row you need to alternate between starting with a full board and starting with a partial board to stagger the head joint spacing.

OBSTACLES

Our layout reference line made the little half wall at the entry way a much simpler obstacle. We needed to start on both sides of the half wall and eventually have the flooring come together and continue across the main area. We simply measured to our layout line on both sides of the half wall to make sure the two sides matched. When we finally got to the row that would pass the end of the half wall, we put the boards end to end, from left to right, and made a simple notch for the wall when we reached it. Everything on both sides came together as planned.


Use scrap flooring material as the beater block between your hammer and the flooring when snapping pieces into position.


A close look shows how the tongue and groove has an extra ridge and a V notch to lock the pieces together.

The next obstacle we encountered was a fireplace hearth that we were able to negotiate by applying some basic fitting

When measuring for wires, be sure to measure to the center of the hole in the subfloor.

techniques. Orient the board that needs to be cut in its correct direction (watch that tongue!) and within reach of where you are measuring. Think in terms of marking the borders of the area you want to keep and be consistent with this thought.

Bump your tape against the existing flooring at the finished level (above any tongues) and measure to the obstacle. Hook your tape on the loose material at the corresponding point to where you bumped the tape on the existing flooring. I think of it as transferring measurements to the loose board.

WHAT'S THE SCORE?

The top surface of engineered hardwood flooring is real hardwood, so you want to handle any crosscuts just as you would any piece of hardwood. Once you have the marks laid out on your board, use a sharp utility knife and a straight edge to score any of the cuts that go across the grain before you cut them with your jigsaw. This is to avoid tear out. Keep the teeth of the saw just on the waste side of that scoring cut so you're not chipping out areas on the finished floor surface.

We also recommend that you use masking tape on either the flooring or on the base plate of the jigsaw to avoid scratches to the surface of the floor planks.

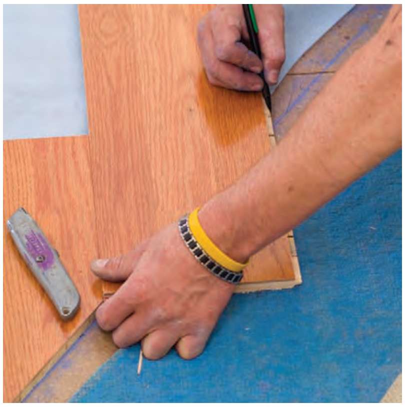
HOW WOULD YOU "SCRIBE" THIS?

Scribing around irregular shaped objects can be a little more of a challenge than notching out for objects that are parallel or square to the flooring. Cut the piece as close as possible to the length that it needs to be when it goes into position and then put it into place. Match up the tongue and groove on the materials without snapping them together. Push the piece against the irregular shaped object and then scribe the end of it using a compass or a pencil to transfer the shape of that mark onto the board.

Use a sharp utility knife and a straight edge to scribe the cut lines when making notches in the material.

Use masking tape on the base of the jigsaw to guard against scratches on the prefinished flooring.

Avoid locking the pieces together when scribing and test fitting a piece on an irregular obstacle.



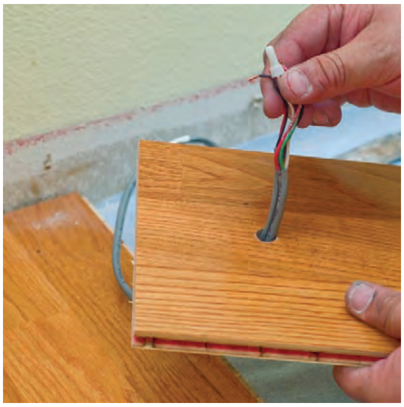
When marking the layout lines to cut an angle at the floor transition, be sure to put the flooring pieces in position as much as possible by placing the bottom edge of the groove on top of the tongue so the piece is marked in the same position as when the pieces are snapped together.

Remember that you have the option of installing from right to left, when it makes sense to do so, to get a board to fit properly before proceeding with the rest of the row. Using this approach, you can keep working on a piece, testing and trimming until you have a good fit. You can go back to your left-to-right pattern once you have cleared the irregular obstacle on the right side of the room.

RUNNING WIRES

Sometimes wires come up through the subfloor for various applications such as stereo speakers. Consider rerouting, eliminating or going wireless so you don't have to cut into your new flooring.

If you're confident the wire needs to be there, you can do the layout for that wire position very much like you did for notching for obstacles. Make sure that the hole in your flooring is at the same position as the hole that comes up through the subfloor. You can usually do your layout with only two dimensions.



Be sure to pull the slack out of the wires before placing the floor board into the final position.

We used a shop vac to make sure the backer pad was clean in that last bit of exposed area before finishing the room.

Measure and mark from the head of the already-installed flooring in the same row and from the side of the piece in the previous row adjacent to the wire location.

With the hole drilled, thread the wire up through the hole from the bottom of the board. Make sure that you're pulling slack as you position the board so there's no wire folded between the new hardwood flooring and the subfloor.

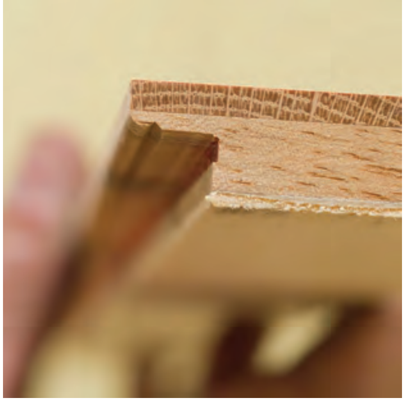
WALL-TO-WALL

As with almost any flooring project the open part of the room is the easy part. When you get close to finishing the room it gets a little bit trickier.

As you near that last wall, the chances are pretty good that you're not going to be able to install a complete board in the final position. Keep in mind that to the eye this engineered material looks like a standard hardwood floor. You can't tell that a full board is 8 inches wide because the laminated boards that comprise each panel are about 2-1/2 inches wide. This means it's not a problem to have the engineered hardwood flooring ripped down to a narrower width to finish the last row of the install.

WEAR AND CARE

Keep in mind that engineered wood flooring has a top layer that is real wood, which means all the wear and care factors of wood applies. The most common marks in wood floors are scratches and dents. In general, scratches are made in the clear-coat finish that was applied to the surface of the wood, which protects it from stains and water damage. The clear coat product that is applied to the top can be more or less susceptible to scratches, depending on hardness and thickness. Dents occur when the wood fibers are compressed. This can happen without significant damage to the clear coat. The softer the wood type, the more likely denting will be. In many ways, the number of scratches and dents in the flooring is a matter of personal taste. Some see it as providing character and giving it an antique look. Others do not. Many of the buildings in my town date back to the mid 1800s and have fir floors. Fir is a soft wood and the floors show plenty of signs of wear, which to most around here is exactly how they should look. Don't like scratches and dents? Choose a harder wood and thick, durable finish—engineered or not, wood is wood.



We cut the bottom of the groove off so we could drop the last piece into place over top of the tongue.

To strengthen the last connection, we added carpenter's glue where the tongue and groove came together.

If the last section of board that you put in is fairly wide, you can probably rip it a little narrower than the gap that you have to fill and install as normal with tongue and groove locked. Remember, you have the thickness of your baseboard as the maximum possible distance that you can be away from the wall when the board is snapped in.

If your last row is a narrow board, you may need to cut off the bottom strip of substrate that defines the groove. In other words, modify it so you can just drop it straight down onto the tongue of the installed flooring.

This was the case on our project. We added some woodworking glue all along that connection where the now-bottomless groove on the last board overlapped the tongue on the existing board.

Once we had everything in place, we used a nail gun to tack the last board in a few places. This held it in position while the

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glue set up. Note: Don't get carried away with nails, this is a floating floor. Also, don't try this on plastic laminate floors.

TRIM, TUCK, TACK

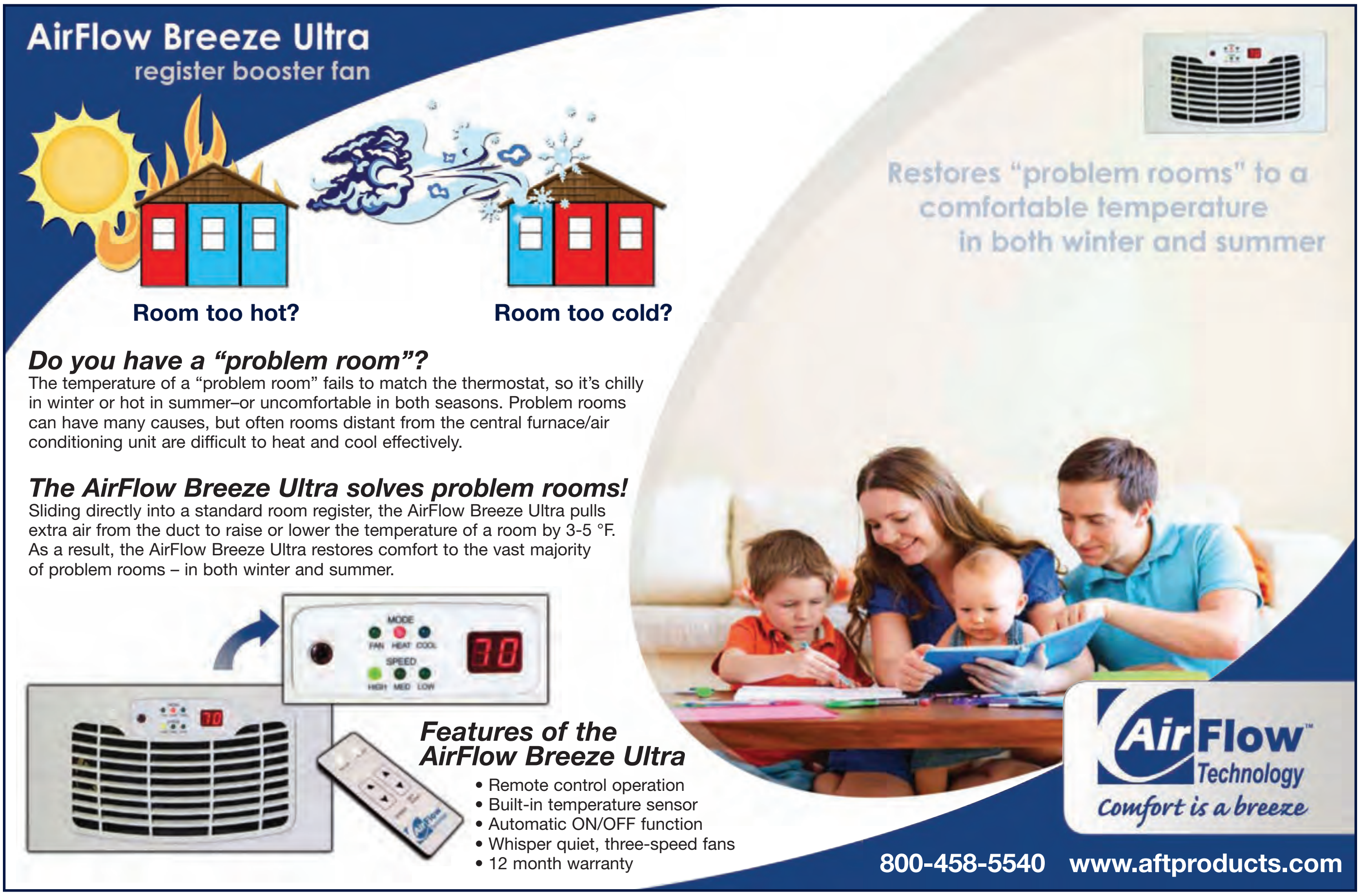
Once we had our hardwood flooring done we trimmed the carpet and stretched it into place. We then used some 1/4-inch crown staples to hold the edge of the carpet down.

This made a very nice transition without any type of a transition strip. Of course, you can use a transition strip if needed or desired.

For a quick and easy floor that installs like laminate but has the look and feel of real wood, engineered hardwood is the way to go. **EHT**

To hold the last strip into position until the glue dried we shot in a few 18-gauge pins. Because engineered hardwood flooring is real wood you can nail it just like any wood product.

We trimmed the existing carpet to match the flooring transition and tacked the carpet into place with 1/4-inch crown staples.



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HERE'S A CASE STUDY OF REPAINTING EXTERIOR METAL SIDING, FEATURING NEW TOOLS AND MATERIALS.

When the old paint wears away, it's time to wash away the chalk and apply a new acrylic latex.

FRESH COATS

by Matt Weber

The house I've been remodeling was built in 1978, and the exterior paint colors did nothing to hide its age. The aluminum siding was a shade of beige that had aged into a dull mustard tone, and the trim was a rust-colored reddish brown. The homeowners hated the look, but the metal was still in decent shape, and they didn't want the expense of re-siding the entire house. A new paint job was the solution. However, over time the original paint coat of the siding had developed a chalky film, caused by the old paint film wearing away. The chalk had to be removed before slapping on a new coat. We had a lot of prepping and painting ahead of us. Here's how it went.

PREP SCHOOL

On any sort of painting project, surface preparation is absolutely critical for any hope of success. Obviously, you need to remove any loose dirt or debris. There was also a lot of shrubbery to cut and remove for unhindered access to the house walls. The chalk that coated the old aluminum siding posed the biggest obstacle for this project. If you wiped your hand across it, you'd draw back a dirty, yellow palm. This stuff seemed to cover every square inch of siding and made for a lousy painting surface.

To remove it, I turned to my trusty pressure washer, a heavy-duty Maxus unit that was equipped with a detergent tank. First, I washed

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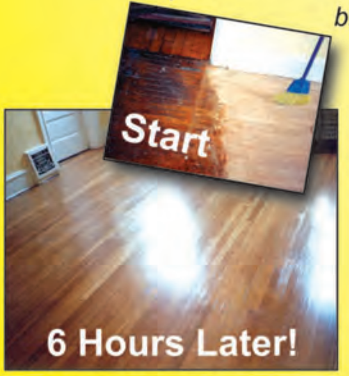
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down each wall with a garden hose to remove the loose dust, and then filled the detergent tank with Krud Kutter Pressure Washer Concentrate specified for house siding. When applying a detergent with a pressure washer you have to lower the pressure and use the right nozzle—a low-pressure tip. This means you won't have the power to throw the detergent as far and as high as with a high-pressure setting, so if there's more than one level to your house then you'll need a ladder. I sprayed on the detergent over the entire wall of the house, working from the top downward, and allowed the chemicals to agitate the surface for a few minutes, per the Krud Kutter instructions. Before spraying it off, I could already see the murky chalk substance dripping down the walls with the detergent.

2700 PSI
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A pressure washer with a detergent tank is a good tool for removing chalk from the old paint surface.

To clean it off, I switched nozzles and returned the washer back to a high-pressure setting. When washing metal siding, it's best to get the nozzle as close to the siding as possible, which makes the most use of the powerful water stream. I worked my way down the ladder, blasting away the detergent and chalk, cleaning one wall at a time. Sheets of chalky water streamed off the house like dirty milk.

During this phase of prep work I had the opportunity to test a new pressure-washer nozzle from Hyde Tools (www.hydetools.com).

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It featured a pivoting nozzle specifically designed to save time and effort. You can complete jobs faster, work more safely and more easily by aiming the stream directly at the work surface without overreaching—very nice when you're on a ladder. Just twist the grip, and the head of the wand pivots 90 degrees up and down, so there is no need to stoop, bend or kneel to get to hard-to-reach places. The nozzle also twists to enable side-to-side work. The Pivot Nozzle is ideal for overhead work. In my case, pointing the nozzle straight up to spray the house soffits would have resulted in all the water cascading back down on top of me. By pivoting the nozzle, I could stand to the side, spray upward and avoid the ensuing waterfall.

PICKING PAINT

Even after all the pressure-washing, there were still traces of chalk that I hit with some detergent and a soft-bristled car-wash brush on an extension handle. The chalk was stubborn.

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To ensure longevity of the new coat we made sure to choose a high-quality acrylic latex paint that would withstand the weather and cling to the metal surface despite any leftover traces of chalk. We went with the new Valspar Duramax paint, available at Lowe's (www.lowes.com), which features long-lasting cross-linking technology and comes with a lifetime warranty. The Duramax brand also has primer mixed right in with the paint. And, because of the chalk problem, we took a belt-and-suspenders approach to paint adhesion by blending the paint with a product called EmulsaBond from Flood Paint Solutions. EmulsaBond is specifically formulated to help

Here's where we tested a couple of colors. The green had to go.

We mixed the Duramax paint with EmulsaBond to fight the chalk.

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We taped off the windows and painted them with a 2" brush.

exterior latex paint stick to hard-to-coat surfaces.

When choosing paint color, it always helps to see a sample applied to the project. We slapped a couple of colors onto the siding, and quickly decided that green was not the way to go. We chose a grayish beige called "stone manor," specifying a satin finish for the metal siding, and white with a gloss finish for the trim.

To determine the amount of paint you'll need, measure the perimeter of your house and multiply that number by the height of the house. Then, deduct the area of the windows and doors. An average window is 15 square feet and an average door is around 21 square feet. Divide the number by 400 to determine the number of gallons needed (one gallon of paint covers about 400 square feet). Always make sure you'll have enough paint to complete the job.

Another color concern is caulk. Make sure the caulk you select either matches your paint color or is a paintable product (most silicone caulk won't hold paint). There were no gaps or cracks to fill in the siding, but I did seal around the windows with a water-based product called Big Stretch (www.sashco.com). Big Stretch is white, so it matched our trim color (and it's paintable, even if it didn't). First, cut out any old, loose sealant with a putty knife—Hyde makes a nice 10-in-1 tool for this job—and then apply a continuous bead of caulk to all gaps and seams with a quality caulk gun.

SELECTING BRUSHES

Latex paints require synthetic bristle brushes (polyester or nylon). The water in latex paint will ruin natural bristle brushes. For oil-based paints, use natural bristle brushes or good quality synthetic brushes.

Use a 3-, 3-1/2- or 4-inch brush for large flat surfaces; walls and ceilings, floors and stairs, siding, shakes and shingles, masonry and brick.

Use a 1-, 1-1/2- or 2-inch brush for smaller surfaces; woodwork, door frames, shutters, furniture and accessories.

Use 1-, 1-1/2- or 2-inch long handled brushes, straight or angled, for hard-to-reach areas of woodwork, molding and furniture, for window sashes and when cutting straight lines of wall paint to molding or ceiling lines.

(courtesy Hyde Tools, www.hydetools.com)

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A ladder standoff helps for windows.

APPLY THE PAINT

I started with the windows, because the upper stories could only be reached with a ladder. I wanted to avoid leaning a ladder against the siding after it had been freshly painted, so it's nice to have the windows painted first. To paint windows I'd suggest investing in a ladder standoff, which is a wide bracket that mounts to the ladder top, bracing the ladder on each side of the window so you have up-close access to the panes. Mask off the glass with a quality painter's tape. I use Frog Tape, which is designed to create a seal along its edges when it comes into contact with latex paint (www.frogtape.com).

When painting with a brush, brush towards the unpainted area and then back into the freshly painted wet surface to prevent lap marks. Also, keep a damp rag handy to clean up any wayward drips or splatter. A wire brush is another good tool for

A wire brush can remove accidental paint marks from stone and masonry.

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removing paint that accidentally contacts stone or masonry. Note: When painting windows, leave the sashes slightly open while they dry so the cured paint doesn't seal them shut. You'll still probably need to run a razor along the moveable seams to break the paint and restore functionality.

Next, I recruited a professional house painter (and the drummer of the band I'm in), Richie Hamilton, to help with the job. Richie has a lot more experience painting houses than I do, so he manned an airless sprayer to paint the siding while I stuck with the trim work of the gutters, downspouts, fascia, etc. Richie used a power drill with a mixing paddle to blend the paint and EmulsaBond with a little water to thin it for the sprayer, which also helps ensure uniform

To coat the siding we first mixed the paint thoroughly and then applied it with an airless sprayer, starting at the soffits and working downward.

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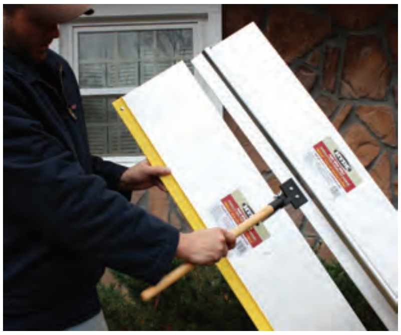
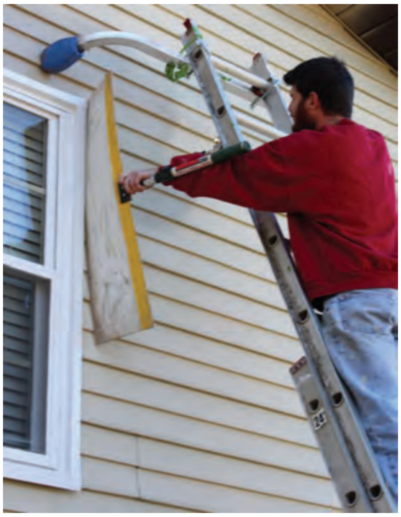
color. (Note: Refer to the manufacturer's recommendations for thinning your paint).

Richie started spraying the soffits first, and worked his way down the house walls following the direction of the siding. When spraying around areas that you don't want to paint, such as your freshly painted windows, use paint shields to help mask off the overspray. Hyde Tools makes some nice wood-handled shields, one style with a plastic spine that allows a little flexibility, and another version with a rigid aluminum spine that keeps the shield perfectly flat and straight.



Paint shields protect areas from unwanted overspray.



When painting this house, Richie sprayed with a strategy to hit the tricky spots first—the areas around windows and trim that needed to be masked—and saved the "field" work in between for using a new extension spray gun from Hyde Tools. The new RVT (Rapid Valve Transfer) system comes fully assembled and ready to use with an airless sprayer. The cool thing about this new spray system is the quick-connect feature that detaches the nozzle from the spray gun and connects to an extension pole in a matter

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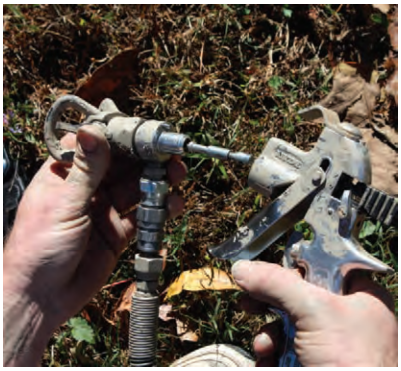
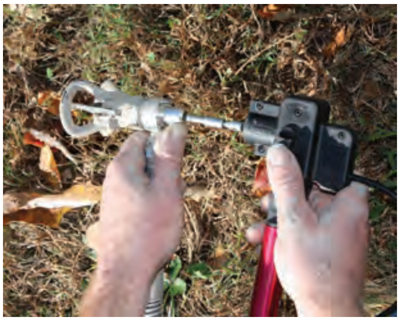


Switch the Hyde RVT nozzle from sprayer to extension pole in a snap.



of seconds. You can also make the switch without powering down the sprayer. This means there is no heavy gun at the top of the extension pole, for easy maneuverability. The pole telescopes for a 12-foot reach with the simple twist of a wing nut to lock its position, and a remote trigger on the pole activates the spray. This extra reach eliminates the need to set up scaffolding or move a ladder from spot to spot, which is a huge time-saver for hard-to-reach jobs. And, because no paint actually travels through the extension pole, the cleanup is a cinch. The light weight of the extension pole means it's not only useful for high elevations, but also for any lateral area that's difficult to access, such as above awnings. When you're ready to paint easy-to-reach areas, just pop the RVT nozzle off the extension and back onto the gun, and you're immediately ready to spray as usual.

The RVT Extension Pole telescopes for a 12' reach.

To finish the job, I painted the front entry door, garage door and window shutters with a color one shade darker than the siding, and using a foam roller, which

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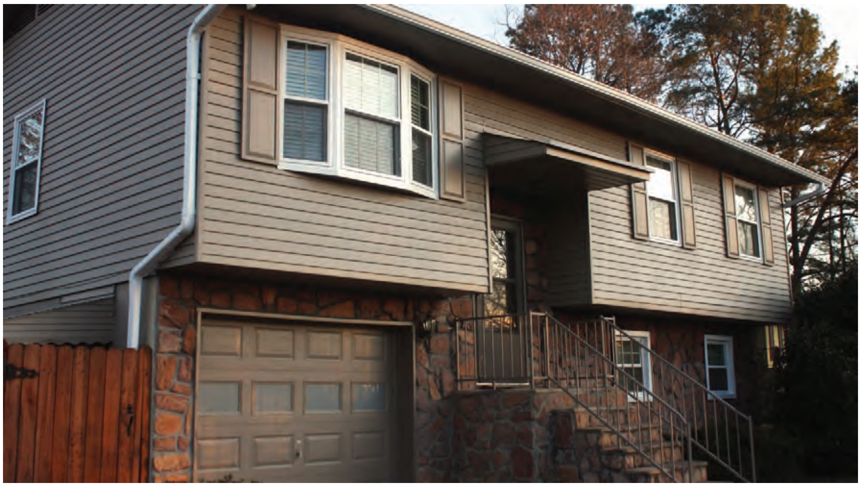
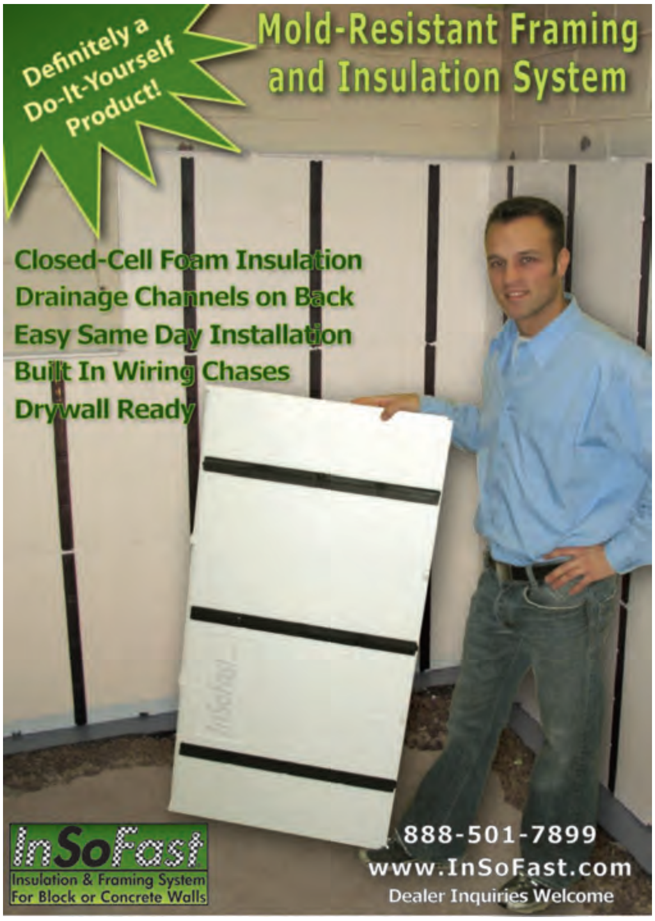
eliminates bristle marks on the paint surface. In fact, we replaced the old aluminum shutters altogether, opting instead for some weather-resistant urethane shutters made by Fypon (www.fypon.com). I painted the new shutters in my workshop to avoid as much ladder work as possible. Once installed, the shutters were the final touch, and the house had a nice, neat style more appropriate for the new millennium. **EHT**

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HEX DECK

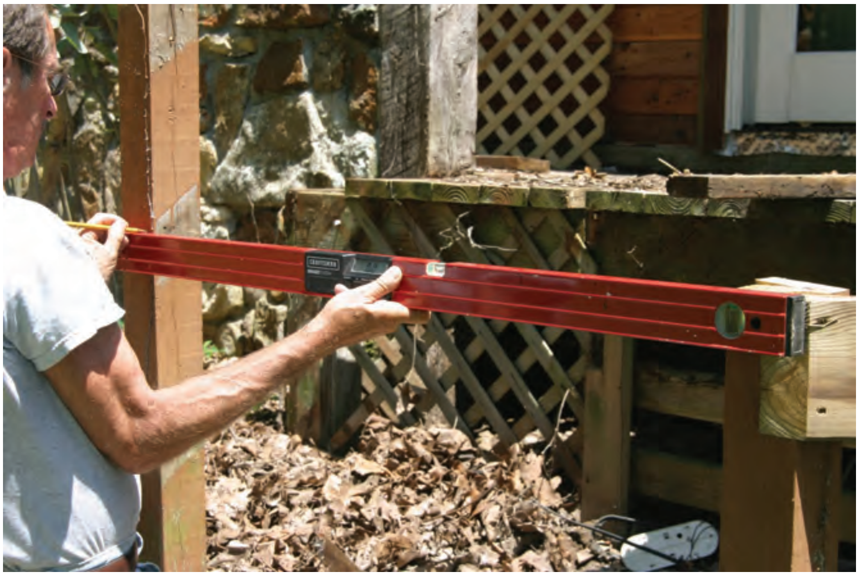
by Monte Burch

Building a Hexagonal Conversation Nook for a Deck

HEX DECK

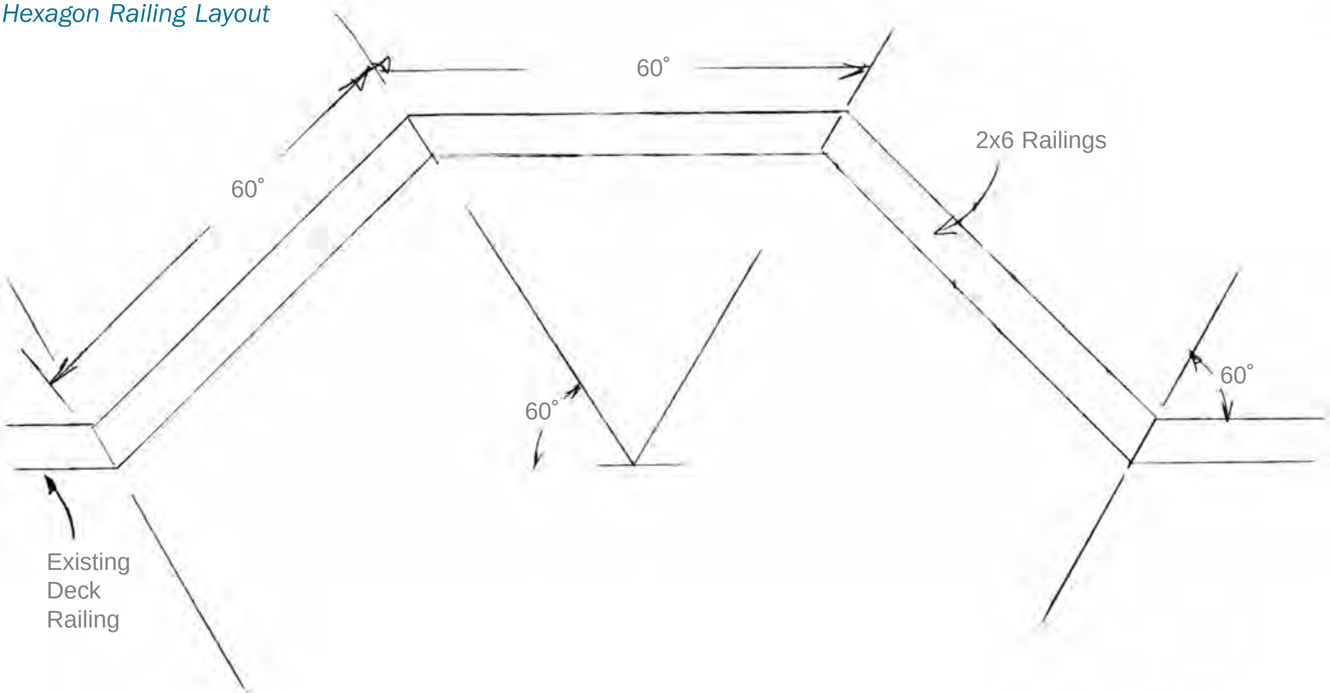
Remodeling a deck to suit your lifestyle is a great way of bringing new life to your home. The old deck shown in this article adjoined a bedroom and had steps leading off a narrow walkway. The steps were in the wrong place when a new cooking area was added to the existing deck. New steps were added to make access easier and the former step area was turned into a sitting area for two, just off the master bedroom. A small, half-hexagon-shaped deck extension provided a great place for early morning coffee or evening relaxing. The same design, however, could be used on a new deck to add interest and a tête-à-tête area.

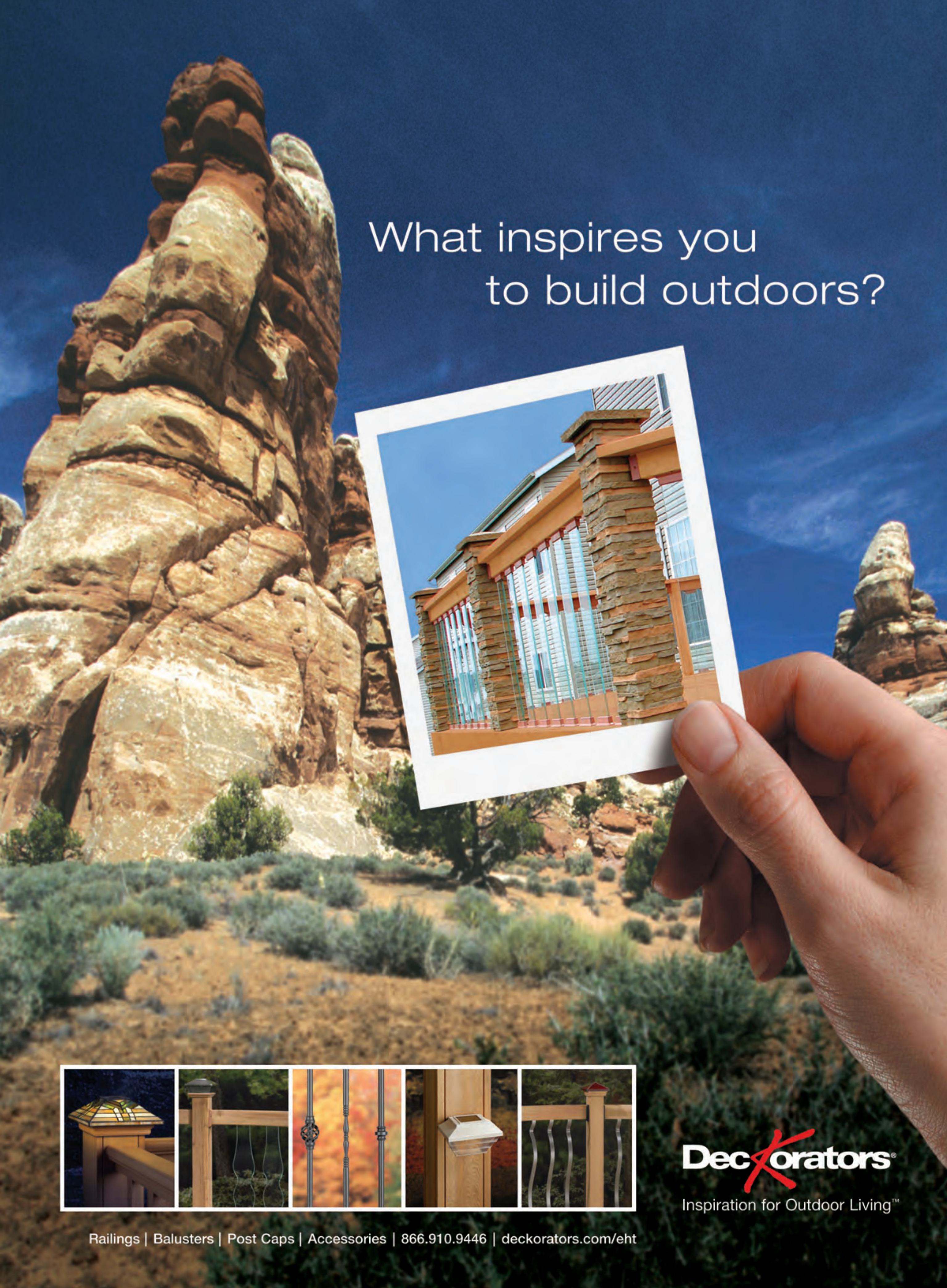
In the deck shown, the outer step and rail support posts were simply cut off the same height as the existing deck to provide support for the deck extension. This created a smaller (48-inch) outer section to match the width of the step posts, with 5-foot adjoining sides. These angles were a bit hard to work with, so the drawings show how to create a standard shaped hexagon with 60-degree angles. The small size could also be increased, but more support would be needed. Although the construction appears complicated, it's fairly easy if the angles are carefully cut. Take your time and check each piece before you cut.



The first step is to mark a level line from the deck girders or joists to the outer support posts.

Hexagon Railing Layout

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FIRST STEPS

If building a new deck or extension on an existing deck, you will need to install support posts for the outside corners. Locate the post holes and dig them to the depth needed. Place the posts in position, making sure they are properly located and plumb. Then add pre-mixed concrete around the posts to anchor them in place. Allow to set at least 24 hours.

First step in the construction shown was to remove the old steps, railings and even the old deck boards.

The second step is the same if building with new outer posts. Using a 4-foot level and a straightedge board, mark a level line from the top of the existing deck joists to the outer corners of the outer support posts. Then, cut off the posts at the correct height.

Before building, consult local codes for code compliance. The entire deck was assembled with Wolmanized Residential Outdoor Wood, pressure-treated lumber to match the existing deck. The deck was also assembled using deck screws. My choice for all deck work is Phillips II Plus Premium Exterior Screws. I've been using them with pressure-treated wood for a number of years with excellent results and durability. These screws come with a matching driver head in the box and are extremely efficient and easy to use with no stripping of the heads. A Bosch 18V Impactor impact driver made quick and easy work of the assembly.

Using a square, mark around the posts.

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Using a hand or circular saw, cut the posts to the correct height

The outer corners of the posts are cut at an angle. Mark for angled cuts on the posts, first on the top, then depth of joists, and then down the sides to meet the other lines.

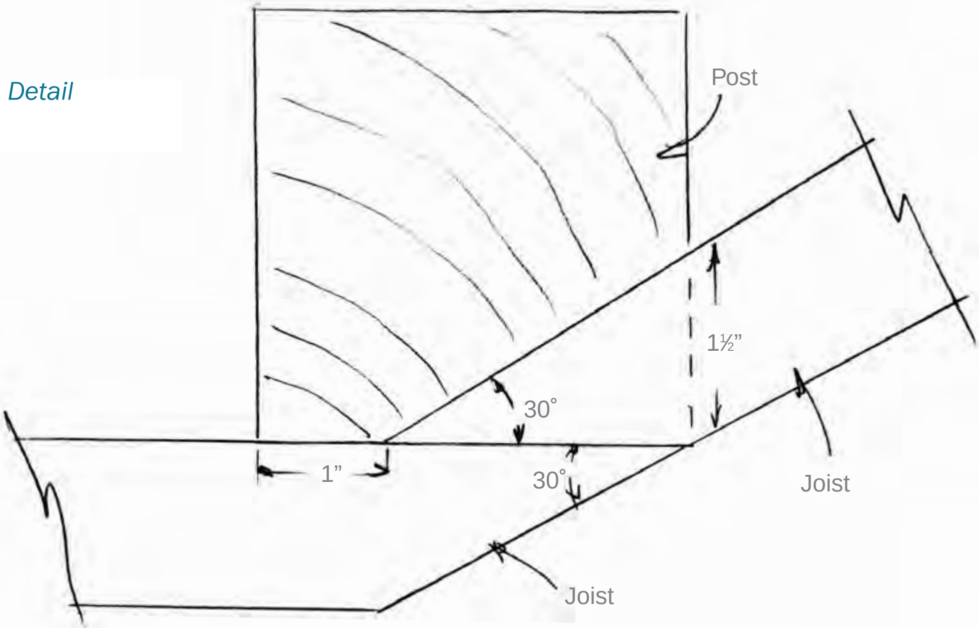
Using a sharp handsaw, make the vertical cut from the top of the post.

ATTENTION TO ANGLES

The outside corners must be cut at an angle to receive the angled end-cut joists. Use an angle-finder or bevel square to determine and mark the angle across the top of the posts. Next, use a square to mark the width of the joists on both outside edges of the posts. Connect a line on each side of the post between the marks. Use a sharp handsaw to cut away this triangular piece.

Cut the two side joists to the correct angles and length, and anchor in place. Then, cut the outer joists and anchor in place. For the deck size shown, you will also need to cut and add another floor joist between the outer joist and existing deck joist. These ends must also be cut at an angle to match.

Post & Joint Detail



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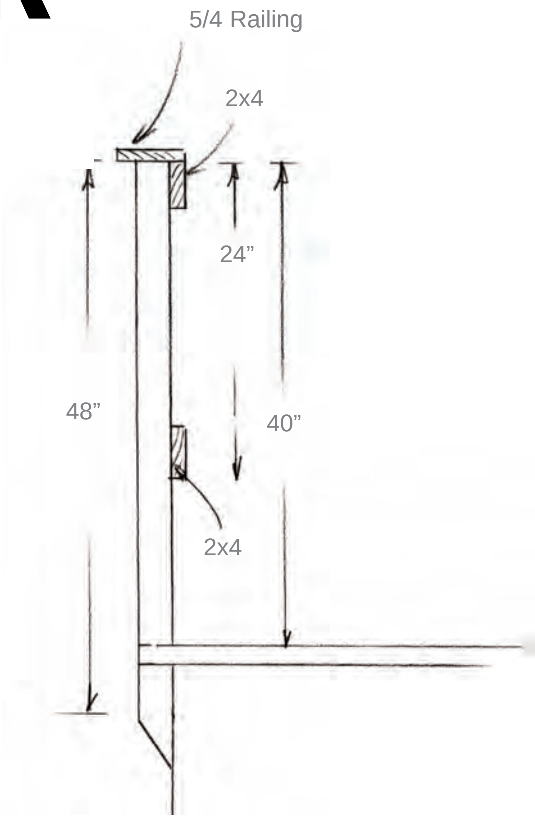

Post & Railing Vertical

Make the matching horizontal cut.

Cut the deck supports or joist ends to the correct angles and attach to the posts and deck. Add deck boards and mark for angled cuts to follow the angle of the supports.

INSTALL THE DECKING

With the framework assembled, the deck boards are then installed. In the case shown, the old boards were removed and new boards were used to cover the old deck framing, extending outward for the new deck area. The ends of the deck boards are cut to match the angles of the outer joists. The deck boards extend out past the joists 1-1/2 inches. The deck 4-by-4 posts extend down past the top edge of the deck 5 inches and have their bottom edges cut at a 45-degree angle. The deck boards are notched to fit around these posts.

Lay the deck boards in place and temporarily fasten, then cut off the outer waste end pieces. Mark the location and outlines of the posts and bore starting

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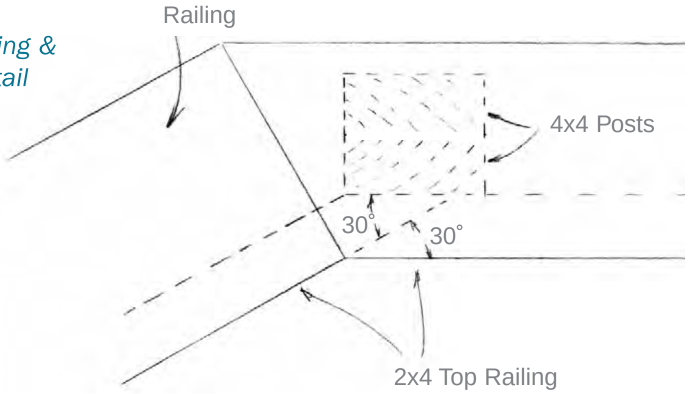

Top Railing & Post Detail

holes in the inner corners. Cut these notches using a saber saw. Cut the posts to correct length and fasten each to the deck joists with pairs of 1/2-inch diameter through bolts with washers.

Next, cut the top and bottom 2-by-4 rails to correct length and angles and fasten them in place to the posts. Then, cut the top 5/4 rails to the correct length and at the correct angles.

Cut the ends off the deck boards.

The deck boards are notched to fit around posts. Mark the cut-outs and bore starting holes with a 3/4-inch spade bit.

Cut the notches with a saber saw.

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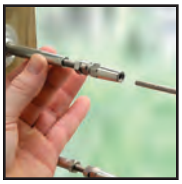
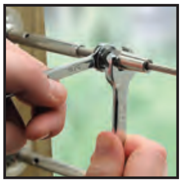
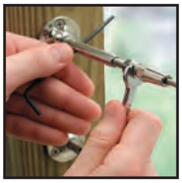


Step 1
Fully seat wire rope.



Step 2
Tighten cone onto receiver



Step 3
Rotate body to tension wire rope.

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Even the best carpenter may not have precise angles at the corners, and the top rails will show any off joints. Double-check the angle cuts by laying these pieces in place before making the cuts. Fasten them down on the top 2-by-4 rails and to the top ends of the posts. The outer corners are fastened together with a predrilled screw.

Cut the 10-1/2-by-1-1/2-inch balusters from a 2-by-6. Cut them to 22 inches in length, and with 45-degree angle-cut ends. Fasten the balusters to the back or outside of the horizontal top and bottom railings. Space the balusters according to local codes (usually no more than 4 inches) with their top ends butting up against the bottom of the 5/4 cap railing. Use a

Plumb and square the posts, fastening to the joists with pairs of 1/2-inch diameter through-bolts and washers.

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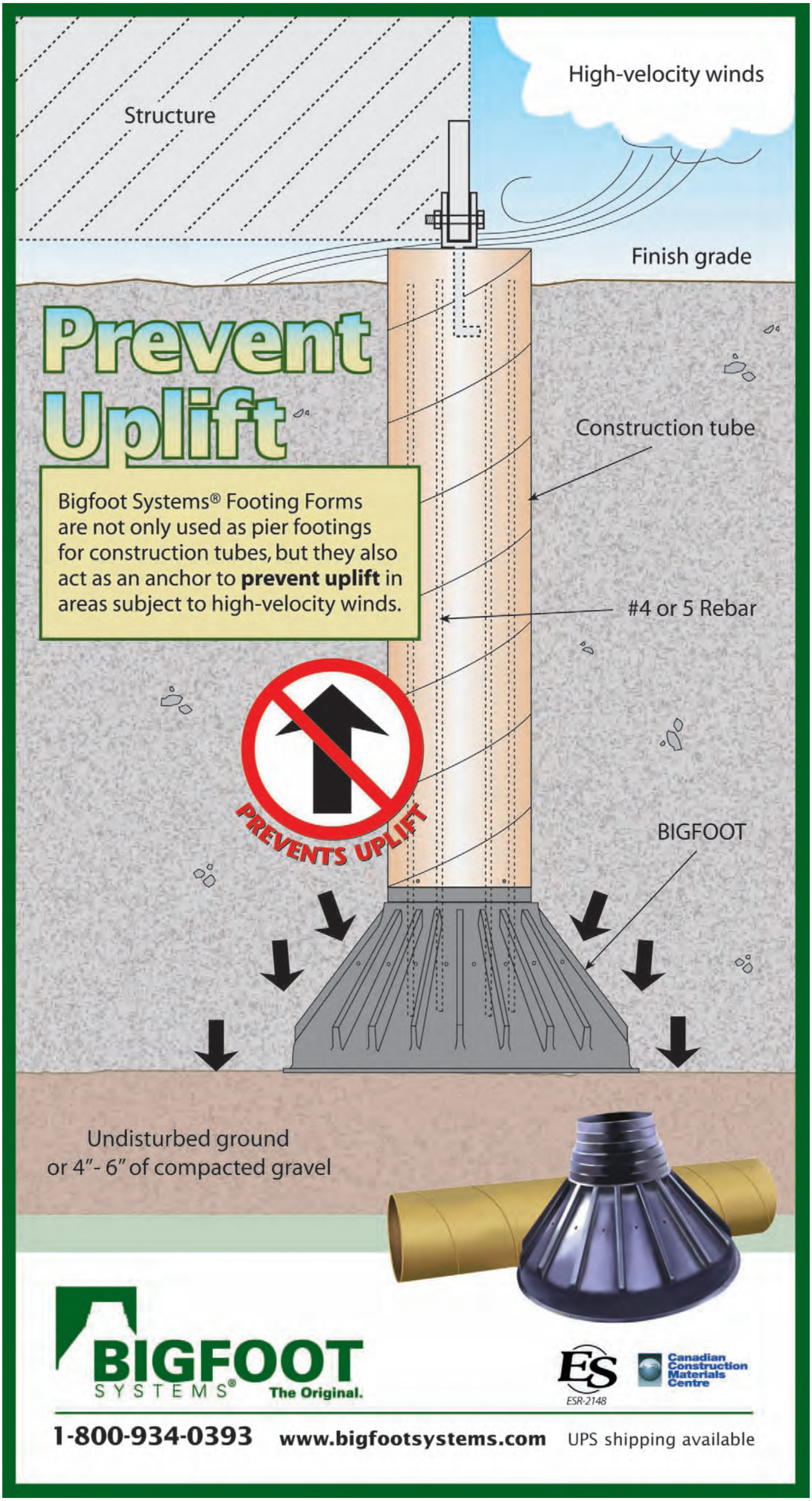
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Tips for Installing Footings

Here are some useful tips to ensure your footings are installed properly and the integrity of your project is maintained:

- You should always make sure that a qualified engineer has designed the footing you are using and that it has been tested by an accredited evaluation firm.
- Select a footing that can carry the weight of your new construction and has met all the proper building codes.
- Ensure you are placing the footing form on solid ground. The more solid the ground the less likely movement will occur.
- Install your footings 4-6 inches below the frost line to avoid potential movement. If you are in an area without frost, the footing form should be placed two feet in the ground and then backfilled to hold it in place when it is being filled with concrete.
- Rebar is an important part of installation. Pour concrete into the footing system first, insert three or four number 4 or 5 rebar rods into the tube. To determine the length of rebar, measure the distance from the top of the tube to the air holes located on the Bigfoot Systems® Footing Form before you place the system in the excavation and backfill.
- Don't risk having to redo the job, do it right the first time!

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level to make sure they are installed plumb.

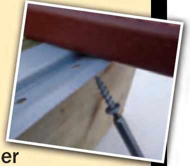
Finish the deck using the finish desired. In this case the bottom of the 3-foot high deck area was closed off with pressure-treated lattice painted to match the house trim. Now for a little relaxing time to enjoy your new deck area. **EHT**

Treated latticework was installed over the bottom portion of the deck, and a Black & Decker airless sprayer was used to paint the lattice.

CHOICES IN HIDDEN DECK FASTENERS

Ty-Lan Enterprises manufactures high-quality hidden fasteners for decking, available in both high-strength low alloy steel and stainless steel coated black, and compatible with CCA or ACQ pressure-treated joists.

The Shadoe Track track-style fastening system is ideal for wood, PVC or composite decking and is available in 4- and 8-foot lengths. Shadoe Track is also sold in a convenient 4-foot length pack with fasteners included.



The Hidden Link fastener is an easily installed clip that works exceptionally well with hardwoods and quality wood decking such as cedar, mahogany and redwood. It is also effective with PVC or composites. The Hidden Link is packaged in a box with enough clips and screws for 100 square feet of decking.

The Mantis clip system is designed for slotted decking made from PVC, composites or wood products. The Mantis can be installed with a typical screw gun or use the coil-fed NailScrew pneumatic gun to install the Mantis clips even faster. The Mantis clips come in a box for 50 square feet of coverage or a contractor bucket for 250 square feet of coverage, with screws included.

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101 WINDOW TIPS

by Kathy Ziprik

Think you know everything about windows? With the help of Simonton Windows® we've created a comprehensive list relating to everything you'll ever need to know about selecting, caring for and maintaining windows in your home. This handy guide is a "clip and save" goldmine of information you'll use time and time again.

SELECTING WINDOWS FOR A NEW HOME

Tip: Windows are a huge investment and a vital part of the construction of any home. Invest time to research the characteristics of the windows you're considering to match up with your lifestyle, household décor, budget and comfort level.

Tip: Analyze your lifestyle. If you want the easiest-to-maintain windows, then select vinyl. If you love the look of wood windows, but don't want the maintenance hassles of caring for wood, research your options of having wood-grain laminate over vinyl.

Tip: Think about the type of cabinet hardware, lighting fixtures and other features of your home. Look for windows that have locks that

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For details, visit **simonton.com/taxcredit/eht** or **call 800.746.6686.**

can match up to those features, such as brushed nickel, brass or antique cherry.

Tip: Consider choosing tilt-in windows for easy cleaning of the glass from the inside of the home.

Tip: Research window manufacturers. Select reputable nationwide companies that offer solid, comprehensive warranties to provide you with long-term peace-of-mind in case something ever happens to your windows.

Tip: Seek out manufacturers with warranties that cover the frame, sash and insulating glass units of the window.

Tip: Educate yourself on energy efficiency features of windows. Select windows meeting ENERGY STAR® guidelines for your area.

Tip: Ask your builder or window installer to see a cutaway sample of a window. Look for windows with Low E glass and fusion-welded vinyl corners.

Tip: Gas-filled, double-paned windows will help cut down on heating and cooling costs from the very first day you move into the home.

Tip: Consider glass options. Not all glass is the same. Just as you have choices on Low E or gas-filled glass packages to maximize energy efficiency in your home, you have choices on the type of glass. Selections include clear glass, tempered, tinted (generally available in bronze or grey) or obscure glass.

Tip: Look at your geography. If you live in an area prone to severe storms, on a golf course or even in a noisy downtown area, then impact resistant glass is a smart investment. Windows with this glass are extremely difficult to penetrate, and the glass helps reduce noise infiltration by more than 40 percent.

Tip: Review grid options. Many builders suggest standard white Colonial grid patterns. However, window manufacturers offer

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everything from brass to dark zinc as grid options. Also look at grid styles to complement your home. A perimeter grid style ideally suits an arts-and-crafts or prairie style home.

Tip: Not every window requires a grid. If you have a feature window overlooking the lake or a mountain view, consider no grids for that window.

Tip: Test drive a window. Before you have an entire house filled with a specific window, go to a dealer showroom or model home to "play" with it. Make certain the unit opens and closes easily. See if the hardware is easy to operate and makes you feel secure.

Tip: Consider privacy issues. If your home is close to neighbors, or if you want more privacy in the bathroom, ask about hopper or awning windows that have injection-molded panels resembling acrylic block windows that obscure views into the home but allow in natural sunlight.

Tip: Look at the construction of the windows. Quality windows should not appear "sloppy" or carelessly made. Select window manufacturers that show pride in the construction of the window and then you can proudly display the window in your own home.

Tip: Project into the future. Forty-five-year-old homeowners will be in their sixties before their windows need to be replaced. While it may be easy to open Double Hung windows now, easy-to-operate crank Casement windows will be simpler on the body as it ages.

DECIDING WHEN TO REPLACE WINDOWS

Tip: Reevaluate the effectiveness of your windows seasonally, to make sure your windows are still working at maximum energy efficiency.

Tip: In general terms, windows should be replaced every 15-20 years. When you get to this lifespan, it's time to seriously review your windows and investigate the latest energy features and low maintenance frames on newer windows.

Tip: How do you know if you should replace windows? If your energy bills are soaring, if your home was a little draftier than usual this past winter or if you see frost on the inside of window panes it may be time to consider replacing your windows.

Tip: Another way to tell it's time to consider replacing windows is if you see "burnt out" areas on your carpets and furnishings where harmful ultraviolet rays have damaged the interior of your home.

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Tip: If your windows don't stay open or won't lock, it could be a sign that the window needs replacing.

TIPS FOR CHOOSING REPLACEMENT WINDOWS

Tip: Do your homework. Invest time to research the reputation of the manufacturer, the product you're considering and the comprehensiveness of the warranty offered.

Tip: When purchasing replacement windows, price is important, but it's not the most important thing when selecting windows.

Tip: Not all windows are created equally. Homeowners who choose the lowest cost product may find themselves very unhappy several years down the road if the company does not offer the follow-up services they require.

Tip: If you currently hear too much outside noise—overhead planes, traffic, neighborhood chatter—request laminated or impact-resistant glass in your replacement windows to reduce noise penetration into your home.

Tip: Impact-resistant glass can be ordered in windows to help keep your home secure from severe weather and potential intruders.

Tip: Look for long-term warranties on the replacement windows you select. Make sure they're backed by a reputable, national company.

Tip: If there are small children in your home, consider Double Hung windows that ventilate a room from the top for safety.

Tip: For brochures on replacement window tips, saving energy in the home and other window tips, call 1-800-SIMONTON to request your free tips pieces or visit www.simonton.com.

Tip: According to a checklist of home safety aspects available from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), ease of operation is tops on their list for window considerations for seniors. Another

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item to consider is the availability of sturdy, easy to operate locks to secure windows in the home.

Tip: As you get older, you can't "push and pull" on a Double Hung window the way you could in your 30's. When replacing windows, consider easy-to-operate Slider or Casement windows.

Tip: Casement windows are especially appealing, when combined with large Bay or Bow window configurations, because they allow a maximum amount of light and airflow into the home.

Tip: Crank-out windows also come in Awning and Hopper styles. With Awning windows, the sash is hinged on the top and the window cranks out and upwards. A pull-out Hopper window has a sash hinged on the bottom of the window.

SAVING COSTS

Tip: If you're replacing windows, look into windows that meet current federal energy tax credit requirements and you could gain up to $1,500 in tax credits in 2010.

Tip: Check with your insurance company to see what type of homeowner insurance discounts they offer if you install impact-resistant windows in your home.

Tip: Check every window and door to make sure there is adequate weather stripping and caulking which will help ensure a secure seal around the openings in your home.

Tip: Saving energy equates to saving money. By selecting glass packages for windows that reduce the penetration of harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays into the home, you're saving money.

Tip: Take the time to seal up cracks where air can leak in and out of the home. This will save on your energy bills. Many experts believe the average home has enough of these small holes to equal one three-foot by three-foot opening.

Tip: Examine your windows. Check for hot and cold spots or drafty areas inside your home near windows, which can indicate energy loss.

Tip: When it's time to purchase windows, request ENERGY STAR® qualified products for your area. These

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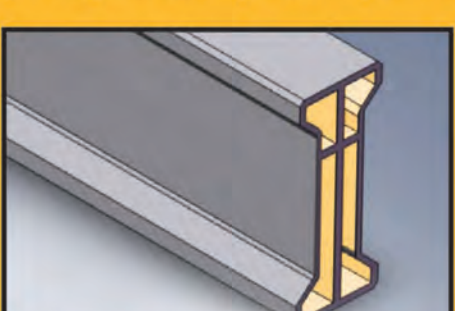

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products can help lower your energy bills from the day they're installed. Find out more at www.simonton.com.

Tip: Request vinyl frames on your replacement windows. Vinyl offers excellent thermal performance and requires very little maintenance. When combined with other energy-smart features, such as Low E coatings, the energy efficiency of the window can increase dramatically.

Tip: Close the doors (and the heating vents) in rooms with minimal use, like walk-in closets, laundry rooms and guest bedrooms, to reduce heat use in those areas.

Tip: Need energy saving ideas for the home? Visit www.homeenergysaver.lbl.gov, www.energyideas.org or www.efficientwindows.org. And, for a free eight-page energy tips brochure download visit www.simonton.com or call 800-746-6686.

Tip: Lock your windows. Don't just close them, but lock them to create an airtight seal that keeps out air leaks and drafts.

PREPARING FOR A WINDOW REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Tip: As part of the window purchase agreement, discuss a game plan up front with your window installer. A professional installer can ease your concerns and answer questions well in advance of a replacement project.

Tip: Window replacement is a progressive remodeling project. Only one or two windows are taken out at a time and then those windows are immediately replaced.

Tip: Pre-determine with your installer how much space will be needed to operate inside and outside the home for each window. Some furnishings may need to be moved away from windows and breakables taken off wall shelves.

Tip: Homeowners should remove window treatments (including shades and blinds) before installers arrive to give them easy access to the windows.

Tip: When selecting a window installer, make sure to request paperwork that assures you that the entire installation team is bonded and insured.

Tip: Review with the window installer if ladders will need to be used near gardens or shrubbery and make arrangements to protect your landscaping.

Tip: Communicate with the installation team which doors will be used to gain access to your home, which restrooms are available for crew use, and what procedures you feel most comfortable with for home access.

Tip: Also remove glass ornaments or decorations from the windows, ledges and sills.

Tip: Kids, pets and contractors—they're like oil and water. For safety sake, make arrangements to keep young children and family pets away from workers at all times.

Tip: Double check the paperwork that comes with your replacement windows … and the windows themselves. If you requested ENERGY STAR® qualified products, make sure the

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labels are on the windows. If you asked for low-maintenance vinyl frames, double check to make sure you received them. And, if you see any broken glass or damaged frames, make sure to bring that to the attention of your installer before the windows are placed in your home.

Tip: Some manufacturers require you to fill out and submit warranty forms. Make sure to do that promptly and keep your window warranty information in a secure location.

Tip: Discuss removal of your old windows with your installer. The new or used windows may need to be stored at your residence for several days. Direct the team where to store the windows, how to protect them and a timeframe for removal.

Tip: Find out your installer's weather policy. While they may be fine working in the rain or snow, you may not want the interior of your home to get muddy or wet. Decide upon acceptable weather conditions for your project together.

Tip: Ask about cleanup. There's a fair amount of dust and mess that comes with a window replacement project. Discuss beforehand if furnishings should be covered during the installation process and what the company's policy is for clean-up after installation—both inside and outside the home.

WINDOW SAFETY IN THE HOME

Tip: Practice safety drills regularly. Small children tend to "hide" from fire, so make sure children are familiar with escape routes and know how to move quickly out of the home.

Tip: For homes with bedrooms on second floors or higher, make sure safety escape chain ladders are under the bed in every room. Practice operating the windows with older children and show them how to attach and use chain ladders.

Tip: Looking to protect your home from harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays? Request Low E glass in your windows to reduce fading

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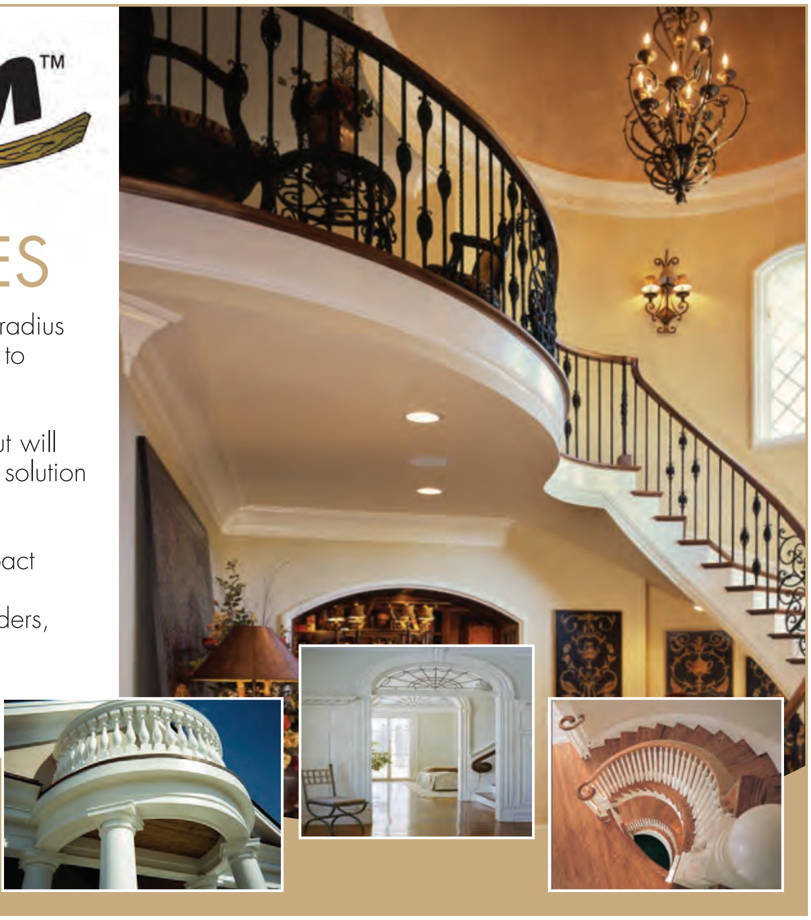

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effects on carpets, furniture and window treatments due to the sun's harsh rays.

Tip: Keep furniture, cribs, or anything children can climb, away from windows.

Tip: If you live in an area prone to active children or potential crime, order windows with laminated safety glass—at least for the first floor of the home. Two panes of glass are adhered to a durable plastic interlayer, much like a car windshield. So, if a stray baseball hits a window, the glass will shatter, but broken pieces remain adhered to the interlayer, preventing glass fallout inside the home. The plastic interlayer is also puncture-resistant, frustrating potential intruders.

Tip: When opening windows or ventilation, only open the ones that young children cannot reach. Simonton offers ventilation locks that allow the window to be partially opened for fresh air.

Tip: Opening second floor windows can present a greater risk to children and pets. In these areas of the home, consider Double Hung windows, which have top sashes that open down while the bottom sash (closest to the floor) remain closed.

Tip: Remember that window screens are designed only to keep insects outside—they will not support the weight of a child or family pet.

Tip: Before ordering windows, make sure to examine the unit's locking system and operations. Multi-point locks help provide more protection against intruders and make it more difficult for curious young children to operate.

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Tip: If you need to use window guards on the interior of your windows, make sure they are operable and can easily be removed. Practice detaching the guards with children in case they need to exit through a window in an emergency.

SCREEN SAFETY ADVICE

Tip: Never consider a screen a safety feature in the home. They are there only to allow air flow and to keep insects out—not to restrict anything of force.

Tip: Never push or lean on window screens. They can pop out if enough force is applied.

Tip: Move cribs and furniture away from windows so that children are not tempted to crawl up and push on the screens when the windows are open.

CLEANING WINDOW SCREENS

Tip: To clean window screens, carefully remove the screens from the frame and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Tip: Place screens on a flat surface (such as the driveway) and use mild soap and water with a soft bristle brush to remove dirt and grime. Clean both sides of the screen and around the interior and exterior of the frame. Rinse off the unit with lukewarm water.

Tip: Allow the screen to dry completely before placing it back into the window or storing it.

Tip: Never pressure-wash screens or windows because the force of the water can damage the units.

Tip: Use extreme care when cleaning screen mesh, since it can be dented or creased if too much pressure is placed on the screen.

STORING WINDOW SCREENS

Tip: While most window screens may remain in the windows year-round, some homeowners prefer to store screens

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during winter months. If you choose to remove your window screens, make certain to store them either in an upright or flat position.

Tip: Make sure nothing sits on top of (or leans against) window screens to eliminate the chance of bending the frames or poking a hole in the screens.

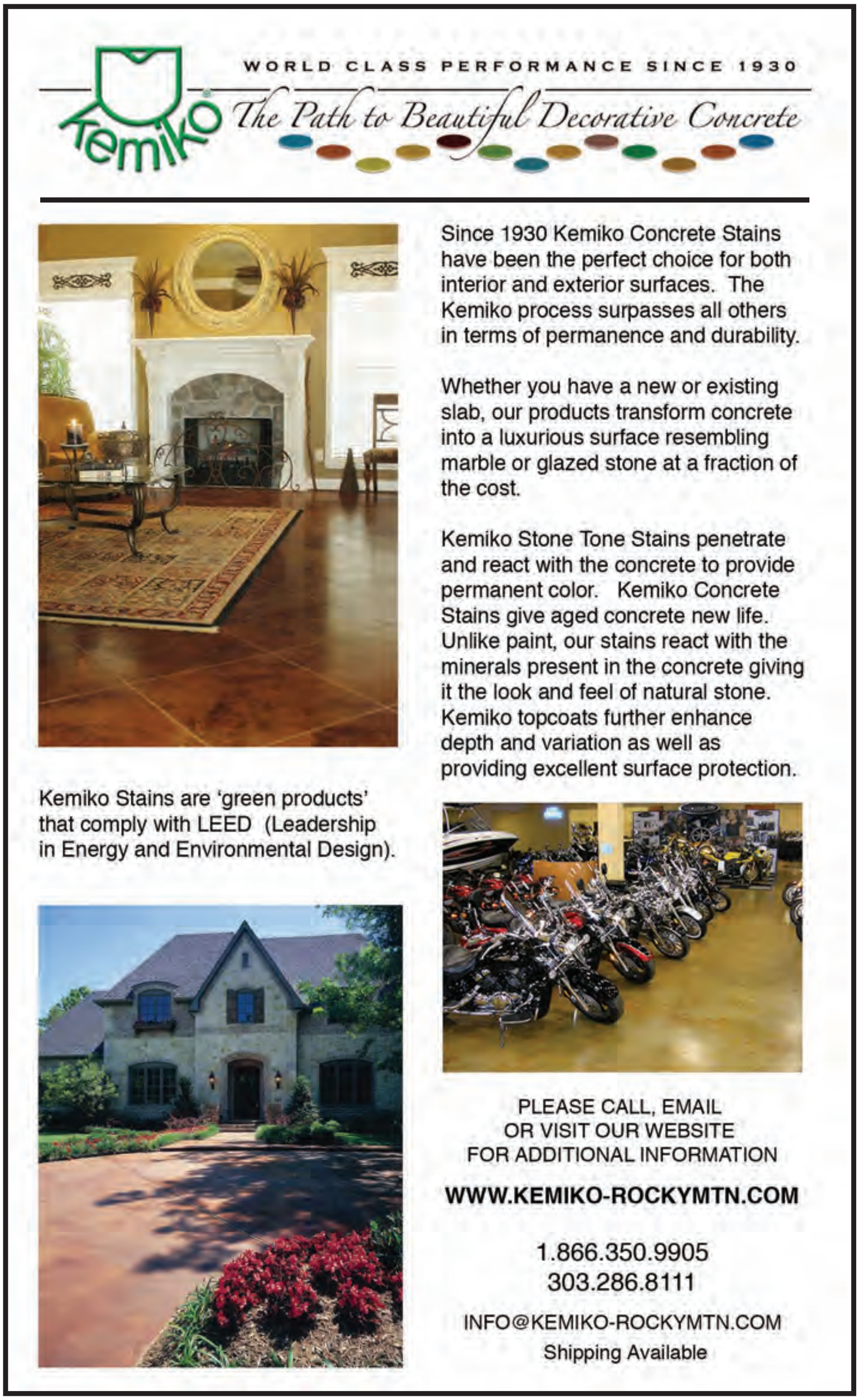
Tip: Covering window screens with plastic or a sheet will keep them clean while in storage.

Tip: If a small hole or tear does occur in your screen, patch kits are available in most hardware and home stores.

Tip: Homeowners unhappy with the look of a patch (or who have a large gash in their screen) may choose to get the screen mesh replaced on the entire unit. Many cities have screen repair services where you can take your screen frame and have new mesh added to replace torn mesh.

PROPERLY MAINTAINING YOUR WINDOWS

Tip: To clean unexpected stains on vinyl windows and door frames (such as bubble gum, felt-tip pens, lipstick, motor oil or top soil), try using Fantastik® cleaner. For tougher stains (such as tar, pencil or oil marks) use Soft Scrub® .



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Tip: If children decide to draw on the windows with crayon, Lestoil® can often remove their creative efforts.

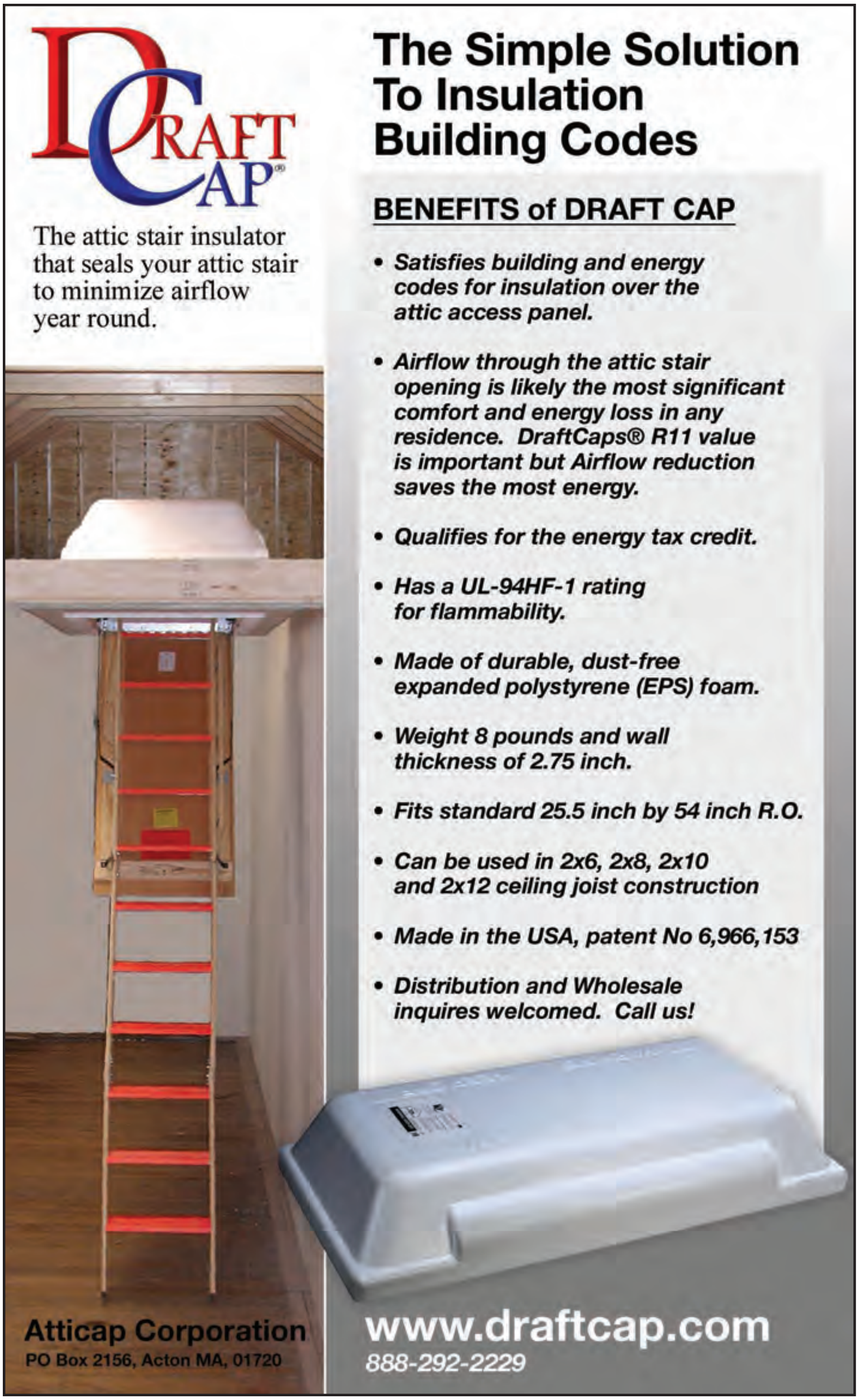
Tip: Vacuum around the edges of your weather stripping to remove any dirt build-up. Carefully vacuuming your window screens regularly can reduce the effort of removing them and cleaning with soap and water.

Tip: Recycle old, white cotton socks and use them for cleaning window sills and frames. Slip the socks on your hands and you can "feel your way" toward a cleaner window. Try using a light combination of vinegar and water to gain sparkling glass on your windows.

Tip: If you have brass hardware on your windows, use a dry, clean, soft cotton cloth to remove dust and dirt from the protective lacquer coating on the hardware. Over time, all brass hardware eventually develops tarnish when the protective coating breaks down. When this happens, remove the hardware from the window and use fine steel wool soaked in a light oil or soapy water on the hardware. Restore the clean hardware's luster with polish and then apply several coatings of a quality automobile wax.

Tip: If the glass in a window gets broken, do not replace the glass yourself. Some windows have insulating glass units that contain harmless Argon gas that helps in the window's energy efficiency. A replacement unit should be ordered and installed that perfectly matches the original window.

Tip: Never insert nails or screws in the interior or exterior of a window frame to hold up holiday decorations or lights. Window frames should never be tampered with or they can lose their ability to function properly.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Tip: Never wash your windows or doors with a high pressure spray. The extreme pressure could crack or destroy caulking around the units.

Tip: Over time, dirt may accumulate on window edges and corners. To remove the build-up, use cotton swabs dipped in vinegar. Make sure to thoroughly rinse with water afterwards.

Tip: To clean vinyl-framed windows, use a soft cloth or ordinary long-handled soft bristle brush and some mild detergent. Do not use abrasive cleaners that may scratch the frame or glass.

Tip: Thoroughly wash the exterior frames of your windows (including the sill that is exposed within your home closest to the screens) twice yearly. Remove any bugs or dirt that may have accumulated.

SWEATY WINDOWS

Tip: No home is 100% airtight. Condensation, or "sweating," is a natural occurrence on all windows and is caused by excess humidity, or invisible water vapor, present in the air. When this water vapor comes in contact with a surface which is at a cooler temperature, the vapor turns to visible droplets of moisture.

Tip: According to the Window and Door Manufacturers Association, normal breathing and perspiration by a family of four adds a half pint of water to the air in the home each hour. That's more than six quarts of water a day. Steamy showers add another half pint. Boiling water for pasta and other cooking activities can add up to four or five pints of water per day to your home. And, dishwashers, washing machines and even dryers can add several more pints of water to the air. Even poorly-insulated crawl spaces allow humidity to penetrate the house.

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Tip: Request windows with glass packages that help keep the temperature of the glass as warm as possible, and thus helping reduce conditions that may cause condensation.

Tip: While condensation on the inside of your windows indicates a potential problem in the home with high humidity levels, the opposite is true when condensation is on the outside of your windows. This means the insulating glass unit is doing its job — insulating your home from the rain, moisture and other environmental conditions you want to keep on the outside.

REDUCING MOISTURE IN THE HOME

Tip: Regularly use ventilation fans in bathrooms, kitchens and laundry rooms to circulate the air.

Tip: Open windows and doors frequently to circulate airflow throughout your home.

Tip: Reduce your number of indoor house plants, since plants increase humidity levels.

Tip: Make sure you have working vents in your attic, basement and crawl spaces. **EHT**

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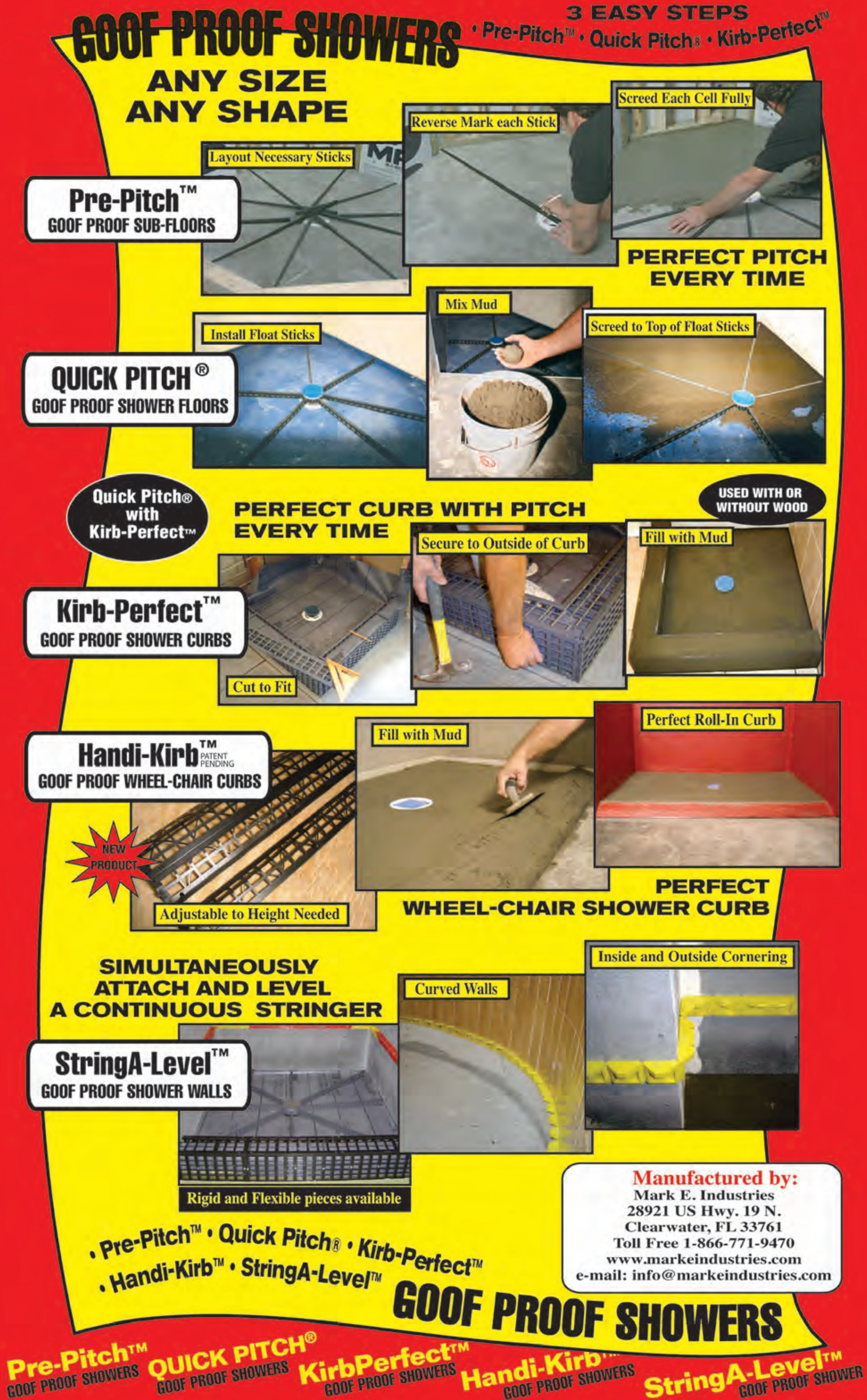

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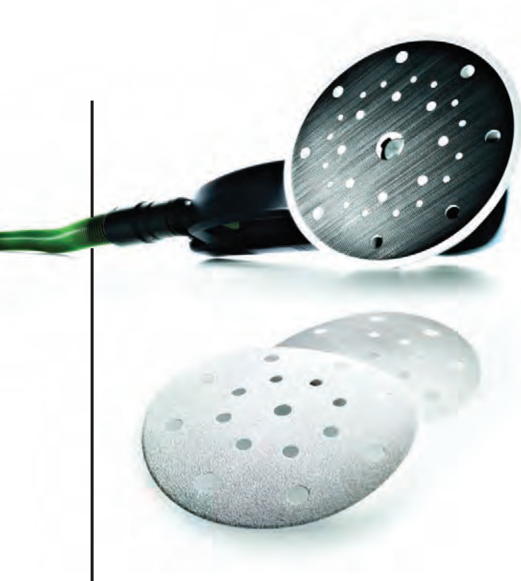

MULTI-JETSTREAM FOR BETTER SANDING PERFORMANCE

Festool USA has launched its new line of Multi-Jetstream equipped sanders, sanding pads and abrasives. The improved design provides higher material removal rates, increases airflow and results in even better dust-extraction efficiency. The patented Multi-Jetstream technology improves sanding performance through the interaction of intake and exhaust air. The new pads also incorporate an enhanced, heat-resistant StickFix design to extend both pad and abrasive life, reducing the costs associated with replacement. The improved design applies to all 6-inch abrasives in the Festool line. The new paper works on previous pads, and previous paper works on the new pads, allowing users the ability to use their existing supplies, without waste. The pricing on the new items is the same as the items they are replacing. For more information, visit www.festoolusa.com.

CHANNELLOCK 6.5-INCH V-JAW FOR SMALL PIPES

The new 6.5-inch 412 V-Jaw tongue-and-groove plier from Channellock offers professionals and DIY'ers the same quality design and right-angle, maximum-bite grip as the other Channellock V-Jaw pliers—only in a more compact frame, making it easier to work with smaller piping and tubing. Perfect for plumbers, HVAC contractors, electricians and DIY'ers, the 6.5-inch V-Jaw plier enables more points of contact on smaller round stock and tubing, and the right-angle teeth grip in all directions for maximum bite and minimum wear. Further enhancing its performance is the undercut tongue-and-groove design, which ensures no-slip jaw action. Additionally, its reinforced edge minimizes stress breakage, and the PermaLock fastener eliminates nut and bolt failures. The 6.5-inch V-Jaw plier is made from high-carbon C1080 steel for superior quality, contains an electronic coating for rust prevention and includes the signature Channellock Blue comfort grips. Visit www.channellock.com.

LED UPGRADE FOR BETTER VISIBILITY

Milwaukee Electric Tool Corporation introduces a new Upgrade-to-LED kit that offers a durable solution to fragile incandescent bulbs. A direct replacement for most 9.6- to 28-volt work light bulbs, the versatile LED module fits easily into Milwaukee's M-series and V28 work lights, as well as most other manufacturer's work lights. Featuring advanced electronics, the new LED module automatically adjusts for voltage and offers more than three times the run-time. Milwaukee offers a limited lifetime warranty for the LED kit due to its unmatched resilience to damage from impact. Coupled with a durable aluminum case that dissipates heat for cooler running temperatures, a 50,000-hour solid state light emitting diode delivers over 250 times the life of incandescent bulbs. The intense white light from the LED illuminates a large work space and offers better color recognition than an incandescent bulb. Optimized for use in existing lights, the Upgrade-to-LED shines a bright beam for increased viewing distance and a smooth halo for illuminating a large space. "Incandescent bulbs are not only inefficient, but are also susceptible to easily break as they heat up. The LED Upgrade pays for itself by eliminating the need for replacement bulbs, saving time and saving energy," says Paul Fry, director of M12 for Milwaukee Electric Tool Corporation. Learn more at www.milwaukeetool.com.

LIQUID WRENCH FOR EVERY JOB

When it's time to tune up tools, chains or hinges—or to tackle stubborn nuts and bolts—the right lubricant can save time and labor. There is no one lubricant or penetrant to solve all home-improvement jobs. To simplify matters, Liquid Wrench offers a line of six different products to match the job. Penetrating Oil is ideal for removing garden hose nozzles, locks, hinges, clamps, corroded pipe joints and metal mechanisms. Chain Lubricant works best on high-performance bicycle and garage door opener chains for long-term corrosion protection. Lubricating Oil removes rust and leaves protection on gardening tools such as hedge clippers, hedge trimmers, hammers and trowels. It is great for stopping squeaks and loosening stuck parts. Silicone Spray provides a slick coating on lawnmower decks to keep grass from sticking and on wheelbarrows to keep off dirt or concrete after hauling. White Lithium Grease is best used on car hood hinges, trailer receiver hitches and hitch balls to keep from sticking; reducing wear and providing protection from the elements. Reducing the buildup of residue, dust and dirt, Liquid Wrench Dry Lubricant is ideal for children's bicycle chains, toolbox drawer slides, folding knives and vinyl window tracks. For more information, visit www.liquidwrench.com.

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HOT PRODUCTS

NEW SIDING NAILER FOR FASTER JOBS

Duo-Fast Construction has introduced a new Coil Siding Nailer, Model DF225C. It is a lightweight, powerful tool designed to handle production nailing of siding, fencing and decking. It is even more productive when used as a system with Duo-Fast “CI” and “CS” series plastic collated round-head coil nails. The new DF225C weighs just 4.5 pounds to lessen worker fatigue. With its tool-less depth of drive, workers can quickly and accurately seat nails into siding to the manufacturer’s specifications, thereby avoiding overdrives and warranty issues. Plus, when used with Duo-Fast CI and CS series nails, which are 0-degree plastic collated, there is no worry about rust staining the siding as can happen with wire-weld collated coil nails. The new Coil Siding Nailer also features a durable rafter hook, a 360-degree adjustable exhaust cap and a comfortable rubber grip for all-day use. Its nail capacity is 300 nails with a switchable trigger and a clear magazine to monitor nail usage. It can be used with smooth, ring- and screw-shank nails from 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 inches with shank diameters of .080 to .105. For more information, visit www.duo-fastconstruction.com.

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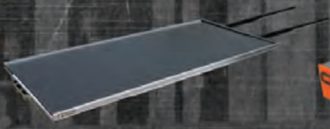

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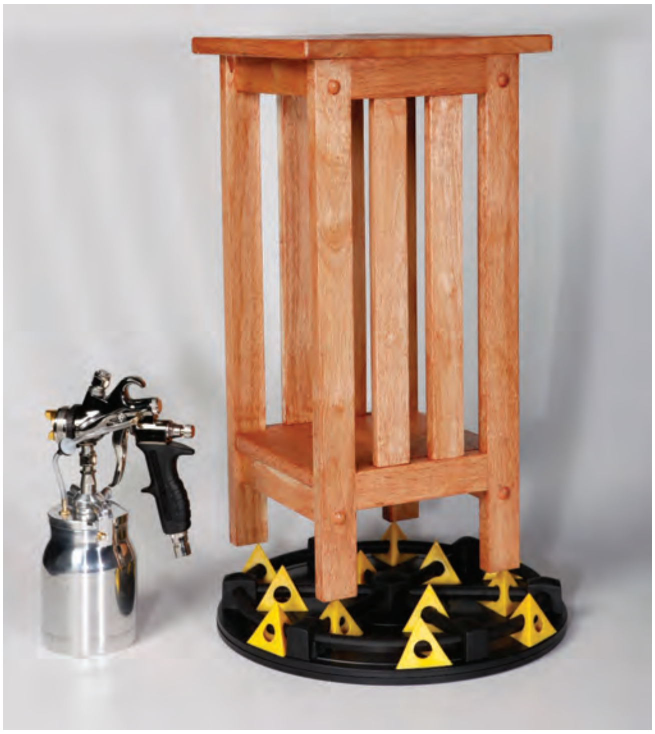

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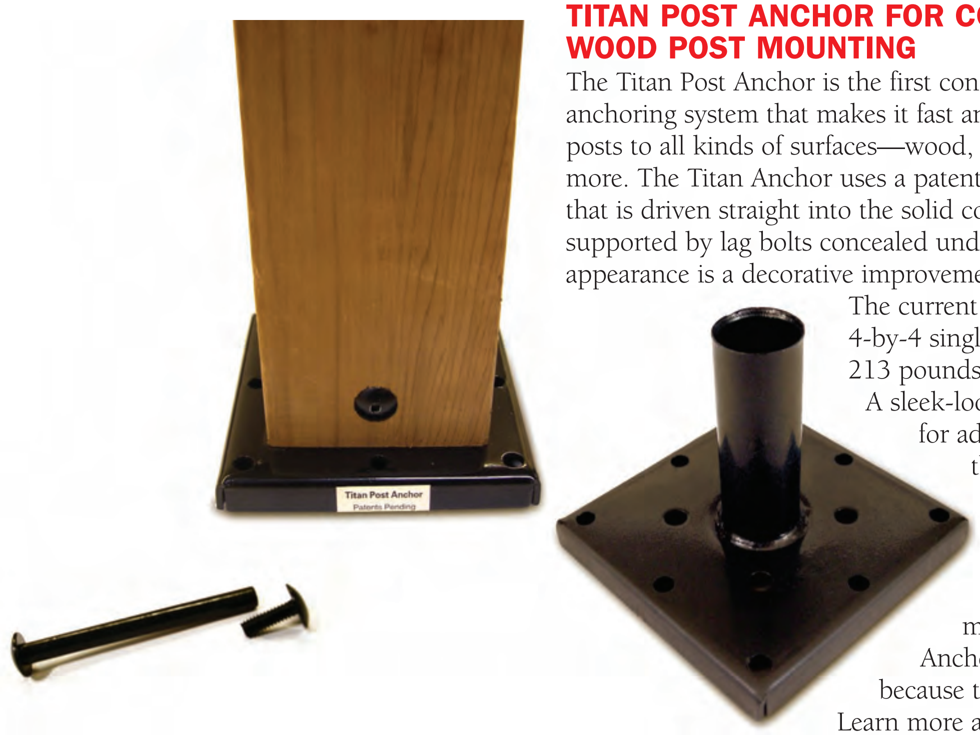

The Titan Post Anchor is the first concealed wood post surface-mounting anchoring system that makes it fast and easy to securely connect wood posts to all kinds of surfaces—wood, stone, concrete, composite and more. The Titan Anchor uses a patent-pending tube anchoring system that is driven straight into the solid core of the post and is further supported by lag bolts concealed under the base. Its clean finished appearance is a decorative improvement over bulky external brackets. The current version has been tested on a 4-by-4 single unsupported 42-inch post up to 213 pounds (36-inch post ratings are higher). A sleek-looking post brace is also available for additional strength, depending on the situation. Two sizes are available to fit 4-by-4 and 6-by-6 posts, with either a hot-dip galvanized powder-coat finish or a 316 stainless steel for harsh marine environments. The Titan Anchor keeps posts drier, longer, because they are elevated off wet surfaces. Learn more at www.ideas-for-deck-designs.com

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Bristol Valley Hardwoods	34
Cepco Tool	43, 55
cetooling.com	48
Color Savvy	49
Continental Fan Mfg. Inc.	50
Culligan	9
Concrete Decor Show	95
Deckorators	63, 65
Decorate With Mouldings	29
DeWalt/Empire Level	83
Dix Systems	89
Draft Cap	93
Drill Doctor	26
DustlessTools.com	24
Energy Saving Products	10
EZ A Peel	45
Falcon Deck & Rail	56
Fausfloor	35
Faux Effects	99
Flex Trim	86
Floor Defender	103
Franmar Chemicals	47
FrogTape	57
Gemini	52
General Tools	19
Genova	7
Goddard Spiral Stairs	88
Gorilla Tape	37
GRK Fasteners	64
Gutster Demo-Bar	102
Handy Deck	17
Hannel	23
Harbor Freight	91
HeatBarrierXP.com	96
Hyde	53
Hydro-Sil	37
IceBlox/SnowBlox	79
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InSoFast	58
Kemiko	92
LadderLevelersLLC.com	48
Lafarge	4
Lam-Hammer	36
Lee Valley	85
Level Best2	13
Lumber Liquidators	33
Mark E. Industries	97
Maze Nails	87
Metal Roofing Wholesalers	78
Milescraft	39
Moduline	20
MP Global	IFC, 1
NuImage Awnings	103
Oneida Air Systems	82
Ovrx	34
Paint Shaver	84
Pexheat.com	54
PexSupply.com	38
PF Waterworks	100
Pink Tool Belts	22
Provision Tools	50
Rainhandler	68
Red Hill Corp.	20
SafeRacks	90
Sashco	16
ShopBot	22
Simmons	74
Simonton	77
Skil	81
Sound Footings	69
Spray Nine	102
Stainless Steel Direct	71
STEP wamfloor	5
Striker Carpenter Pencil	88
Stokes Ladders	18
Swylite	58
TG Tools	2, 3, BC
The Iron Shop	21
The Spoutoff	12
TimberTech	75
Titan Building Products	72
T-Jak	80
TruckWrks	101
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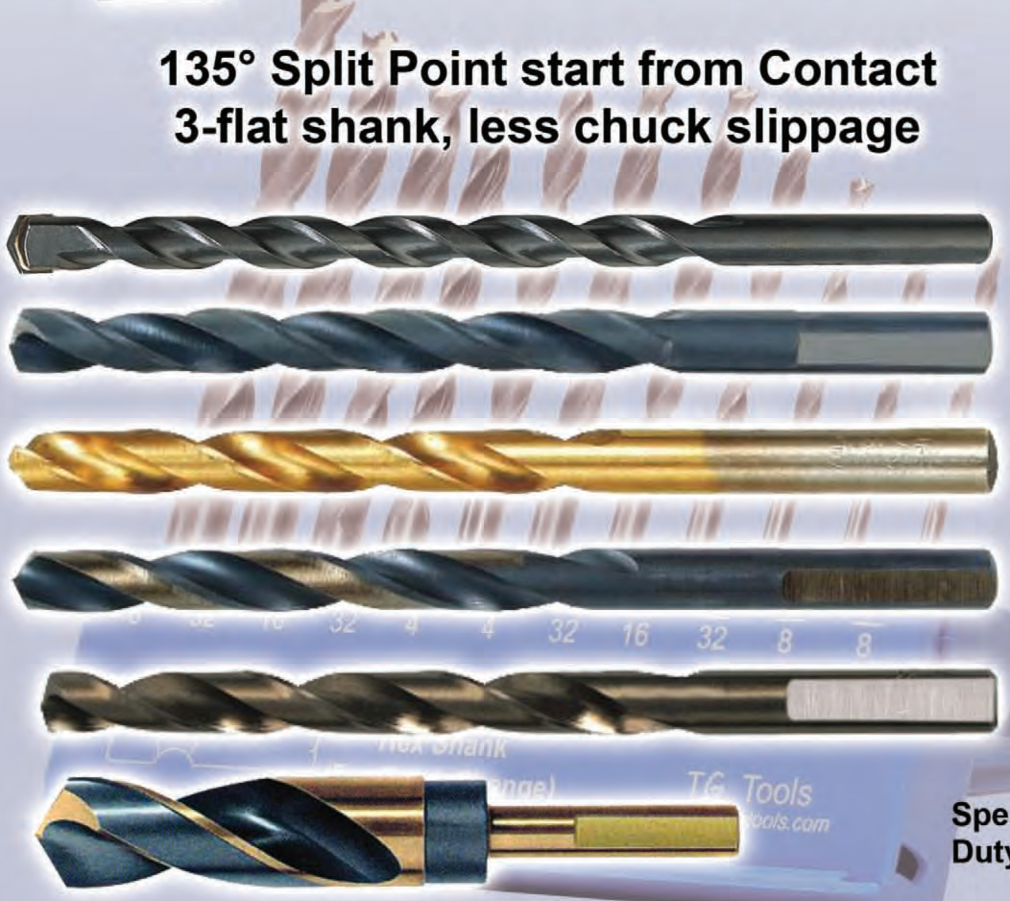

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